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Disraeli, Benjamin, Earl of Beaconsfield

THE
NOVELS AND TALES

OF

THE RIGHT HON. B. DISRAELI, M.P.

VENETIA. 1837.
CONTARINI FLEMING.



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TO LORD LYNDHURST.

IN happier hours, when I first mentioned to you the idea of this Work, it was my intention, while inscribing it with your name, to have entered into some details as to the principles which had guided me in its composition, and the feelings with which I had attempted to shadow forth, though as "in a glass darkly," two of the most renowned and refined spirits that have adorned these our latter days. But now, I will only express a hope that the time may come when in these pages you may find some relaxation from the cares, and some distraction from the sorrows, of existence, and that you will then receive this dedication as a record of my respect and my affection.

May, 1837.

Δ.

TO READ LYNCHIST

ADVERTISEMENT.

This Work was first published in the year 1837.

VENETIA.

CHAPTER I.

SOME ten years before the revolt of our American colonies, there was situate in one of our midland counties, on the borders of an extensive forest, an ancient hall that belonged to the Herberts, but which, though ever well preserved, had not until that period been visited by any member of the family, since the exile of the Stuarts. It was an edifice of considerable size, built of grey stone, much covered with ivy, and placed upon the last gentle elevation of a long ridge of hills, in the centre of a crescent of woods, that far overtopped its clusters of tall chimneys and turreted gables. Although the principal chambers were on the first story, you could nevertheless step forth from their windows on a broad terrace, whence you descended into the gardens by a double flight of stone steps, exactly in the middle of its length. These gardens were of some extent, and filled with evergreen shrubberies of remarkable overgrowth, while occasionally turfy vistas, cut in the distant woods, came sloping down to the south, as if they opened to receive the sunbeam that greeted the genial aspect of the mansion. The ground-floor was principally occupied by the hall itself, which was of great dimensions, hung round with many a family portrait and rural picture, furnished with long oaken seats covered with scarlet cushions, and ornamented with a parti-coloured floor of alternate diamonds of black and white marble. From the centre of the roof of the mansion, which was always covered with pigeons, rose the clock-tower of the chapel, surmounted by a vane; and before the mansion itself was a large plot of grass, with a fountain in the centre, surrounded by a hedge of honeysuckle.

This plot of grass was separated from an extensive park, that opened in front of the hall, by tall iron gates, on each of the pillars of which was a lion rampant supporting the escutcheon of

the family. The deer wandered in this enclosed and well-wooded demesne, and about a mile from the mansion, in a direct line with the iron gates, was an old-fashioned lodge, which marked the limit of the park, and from which you emerged into a fine avenue of limes bounded on both sides by fields. At the termination of this avenue was a strong but simple gate, and a woodman's cottage; and then spread before you a vast landscape of open, wild lands, which seemed on one side interminable, while on the other the eye rested on the dark heights of the neighbouring forest.

This picturesque and very secluded abode was the residence of Lady Annabel Herbert and her daughter, the young and beautiful Venetia, a child, at the time when our history commences, of very tender age. It was nearly seven years since Lady Annabel and her infant daughter had sought the retired shades of Cherbury, which they had never since quitted. They lived alone and for each other; the mother educated her child, and the child interested her mother by her affectionate disposition, the development of a mind of no ordinary promise, and a sort of captivating grace and charming playfulness of temper, which were extremely delightful. Lady Annabel was still young and very lovely. That she was wealthy her establishment clearly denoted, and she was a daughter of one of the haughtiest houses in the kingdom. It was strange then that, with all the brilliant accidents of birth, and beauty, and fortune, she should still, as it were in the morning of her life, have withdrawn to this secluded mansion, in a county where she was personally unknown, distant from the metropolis, estranged from all her own relatives and connexions, and without the resource of even a single neighbour, for the only place of importance in her vicinity was uninhabited. The general impression of the villagers was that Lady Annabel was a widow; and yet there were some speculators who would shrewdly remark, that her ladyship had never worn weeds, although her husband could not have been long dead when she first arrived at Cherbury. On the whole, however, these good people were not very inquisitive; and it was fortunate for them; for there was little chance and slight means of gratifying their curiosity. The whole of the establishment had been formed at Cherbury, with the exception of her ladyship's waiting-woman, Mistress Pauncefort, and she was by far too great a personage to condescend to reply to any question which was not made to her by Lady Annabel herself.

The beauty of the young Venetia was not the hereditary gift of her beautiful mother. It was not from Lady Annabel that Venetia Herbert had derived those seraphic locks that fell over her shoulders and down her neck in golden streams, nor that clear grey eye, even whose childish glance might perplex the gaze of man-

hood, nor that little aquiline nose, that gave a haughty expression to a countenance that had never yet dreamed of pride, nor that radiant complexion, that dazzled with its brilliancy, like some winged minister of Raffael or Corregio. The peasants that passed the lady and her daughter in their walks, and who blessed her as they passed, for all her grace and goodness, often marvelled why so fair a mother and so fair a child should be so dissimilar, that one indeed might be compared to a starry night, and the other to a sunny day.

CHAPTER II.

It was a bright and soft spring morning: the dewy vistas of Cherbury sparkled in the sun, the cooing of the pigeons sounded around, the peacocks strutted about the terrace and spread their tails with infinite enjoyment and conscious pride, and Lady Annabel came forth with her little daughter, to breathe the renovating odours of the season. The air was scented with the violet, tufts of daffodils were scattered all about, and though the snowdrop had vanished, and the primroses were fast disappearing, their wild and shaggy leaves still looked picturesque and glad.

"Mamma," said the little Venetia, "is this spring?"

"This is spring, my child," replied Lady Annabel, "beautiful spring! The year is young and happy, like my little girl."

"If Venetia be like the spring, mamma is like the summer!" replied the child; and the mother smiled. "And is not the summer young and happy?" resumed Venetia.

"It is not quite so young as the spring," said Lady Annabel, looking down with fondness on her little companion, "and, I fear, not quite so happy."

"But it is as beautiful," said Venetia.

"It is not beauty that makes us happy," said Lady Annabel "to be happy, my love, we must be good."

"Am I good?" said Venetia.

"Very good," said Lady Annabel.

"I am very happy," said Venetia; "I wonder whether, if I be always good, I shall always be happy?"

"You cannot be happy without being good, my love; but happiness depends upon the will of God. If you be good he will guard over you."

"What can make me unhappy, mamma?" inquired Venetia.

"An evil conscience, my love."

"Conscience!" said Venetia; "what is conscience?"

"You are not yet quite old enough to understand," said Lady

Annabel, "but some day I will teach you. Mamma is now going to take a long walk, and Venetia shall walk with her."

So saying, the Lady Annabel summoned Mistress Pouncefort, a gentlewoman of not more discreet years than might have been expected in the attendant of so young a mistress; but one well qualified for her office, very zealous and devoted, somewhat consequential, full of energy and decision, capable of directing, fond of giving advice, and habituated to command. The Lady Annabel, leading her daughter, and accompanied by her faithful bloodhound, Marmion, ascended one of those sloping vistas that we have noticed, Mistress Pouncefort following them about a pace behind, and after her a groom, at a very respectful distance, leading Miss Herbert's donkey.

They soon entered a winding path through the wood which was the background of their dwelling. Lady Annabel was silent, and lost in her reflections; Venetia plucked the beautiful wild hyacinths that then abounded in the wood in such profusion, that their beds spread like patches of blue enamel, and gave them to Mistress Pouncefort, who, as the collection increased, handed them over to the groom; who, in turn, deposited them in the wicker seat prepared for his young mistress. The bright sun bursting through the tender foliage of the year, the clear and genial air, the singing of the birds, and the wild and joyous exclamations of Venetia, as she gathered her flowers, made it a cheerful party, notwithstanding the silence of its mistress.

When they emerged from the wood, they found themselves on the brow of the hill, a small down, over which Venetia ran, exulting in the healthy breeze which, at this exposed height, was strong and fresh. As they advanced to the opposite declivity to that which they had ascended, a wide and peculiar landscape opened before them. The extreme distance was formed by an undulating ridge of lofty and savage hills; nearer than these were gentler elevations, partially wooded; and at their base was a rich valley, its green meads fed by a clear and rapid stream, which glittered in the sun as it coursed on, losing itself at length in a wild and sedgy lake that formed the furthest limit of a widely spreading park. In the centre of this park, and not very remote from the banks of the rivulet, was an ancient gothic building, that had once been an abbey of great repute and wealth, and had not much suffered in its external character, by having served for nearly two centuries and a half as the principal dwelling of an old baronial family.

Descending the downy hill, that here and there was studded with fine old trees, enriching by their presence the view from the abbey, Lady Annabel and her party entered the meads, and, skirting the lake, approached the venerable walls without crossing the stream.

It was difficult to conceive a scene more silent and more desolate. There was no sign of life, and not a sound save the occasional cawing of a rook. Advancing towards the abbey, they passed a pile of buildings that, in the summer, might be screened from sight by the foliage of a group of elms, too scanty at present to veil their desolation. Wide gaps in the roof proved that the vast and dreary stables were no longer used; there were empty granaries, whose doors had fallen from their hinges; the gate of the court-yard was prostrate on the ground; and the silent clock that once adorned the cupola over the noble entrance arch, had long lost its index. Even the litter of the yard appeared dusty and grey with age. You felt sure no human foot could have disturbed it for years. At the back of these buildings were nailed the trophies of the game-keeper: hundreds of wild cats, dried to blackness, stretched their downward heads and legs from the mouldering wall; hawks, magpies, and jays hung in tattered remnants; but all grey, and even green, with age; and the heads of birds in plenteous rows, nailed beak upward, and so dried and shrivelled by the suns and winds and frosts of many seasons, that their distinctive characters were lost.

"Do you know, my good Pouncefort," said Lady Annabel, "that I have an odd fancy to-day to force an entrance into the old abbey. It is strange, fond as I am of this walk, that we have never yet entered it. Do you recollect our last vain efforts? Shall we be more fortunate this time, think you?"

Mistress Pouncefort smiled and smirked, and, advancing to the old gloomy porch, gave a very determined ring at the bell. Its sound might be heard echoing through the old cloisters, but a considerable time elapsed without any other effect being produced. Perhaps Lady Annabel would have now given up the attempt, but the little Venetia expressed so much regret at the disappointment, that her mother directed the groom to reconnoitre in the neighbourhood, and see if it were possible to discover any person connected with the mansion.

"I doubt our luck, my lady," said Mistress Pouncefort, "for they do say that the abbey is quite uninhabited."

"'Tis a pity," said Lady Annabel, "for, with all its desolation, there is something about this spot which ever greatly interests me."

"Mamma, why does no one live here?" said Venetia.

"The master of the abbey lives abroad, my child."

"Why does he, mamma?"

"Never ask questions, Miss Venetia," said Mistress Pouncefort, in a hushed and solemn tone; "it is not pretty." Lady Annabel had moved away.

The groom returned, and said he had met a very old man,

picking water-cresses, and he was the only person who lived in the abbey, except his wife, and she was bed-ridden. The old man had promised to admit them when he had completed his task, but not before, and the groom feared it would be some time before he arrived.

"Come, Pouncefort, rest yourself on this bench," said Lady Annabel, seating herself in the porch; "and Venetia, my child, come hither to me."

"Mamma," said Venetia, "what is the name of the gentleman to whom this abbey belongs?"

"Lord Cadurcis, love."

"I should like to know why Lord Cadurcis lives abroad," said Venetia, musingly.

"There are many reasons why persons may choose to quit their native country, and dwell in another, my love," said Lady Annabel, very quietly; "some change the climate for their health."

"Did Lord Cadurcis, mamma?" asked Venetia.

"I do not know Lord Cadurcis, dear, or anything of him, except that he is a very old man, and has no family."

At this moment there was a sound of bars and bolts withdrawn, and the falling of a chain, and at length the massy door slowly opened, and the old man appeared and beckoned to them to enter.

"'Tis eight years, come Martinmas, since I opened this door," said the old man, "and it sticks a bit. You must walk about by yourselves, for I have no breath, and my mistress is bed-ridden. There, straight down the cloister, you can't miss your way; there is not much to see."

The interior of the abbey formed a quadrangle, surrounded by the cloisters, and in this inner court was a curious fountain, carved with exquisite skill by some gothic artist in one of those capricious moods of sportive invention, that produced those grotesque medleys for which the feudal sculptor was celebrated. Not a sound was heard except the fall of the fountain and the light echoes that its voice called up.

The staircase led Lady Annabel and her party through several small rooms, scantily garnished with very ancient furniture, in some of which were portraits of the family, until they at length entered a noble saloon, once the refectory of the abbey, and not deficient in splendour, though sadly soiled and worm-eaten. It was hung with tapestry representing the Cartoons of Raffael, and their still vivid colours contrasted with the faded hangings and the dingy damask of the chairs and sofas. A mass of Cromwellian armour was huddled together in a corner of a long monkish gallery, with a standard, encrusted with dust, and a couple of old drums, one

broken. From one of the windows they had a good view of the old walled garden, which did not tempt them to enter it; it was a wilderness, the walks no longer distinguishable from the rank vegetation of the once cultivated lawns; the terraces choked up with the unchecked shrubberies; and here and there a leaden statue, a goddess or a satyr, prostrate, and covered with moss and lichen.

"It makes me melancholy," said Lady Annabel; "let us return."

"Mamma," said Venetia, "are there any ghosts in this abbey?"

"You may well ask me, love," replied Lady Annabel; "it seems a spell-bound place. But, Venetia, I have often told you there are no such things as ghosts."

"Is it naughty to believe in ghosts, mamma, for I cannot help believing in them?"

"When you are older, and have more knowledge, you will not believe in them, Venetia," replied Lady Annabel.

Our friends left Cadurcis abbey. Venetia mounted her donkey, her mother walked by her side; the sun was beginning to decline when they again reached Cherbury, and the air was brisk. Lady Annabel was glad to find herself by her fireside in her little terrace-room, and Venetia, fetching her book, read to her mother until their dinner hour.

CHAPTER III.

Two serene and innocent years had glided away at Cherbury since this morning ramble to Cadurcis abbey, and Venetia had grown in loveliness, in goodness, and intelligence. Her lively and somewhat precocious mind had become greatly developed; and, though she was only nine years of age, it scarcely needed the affection of a mother to find in her an interesting and engaging companion. Although feminine education was little regarded in those days, that of Lady Annabel had been an exception to the general practice of society. She had been brought up with the consciousness of other objects of female attainment and accomplishment than embroidery, "the complete art of making pastry," and reading "The Whole Duty of Man." She had profited, when a child, by the guidance of her brother's tutor, who had bestowed no unfruitful pains upon no ordinary capacity. She was a good linguist, a fine musician, was well read in our elder poets and their Italian originals, was no unskilful artist, and had acquired some knowledge of botany when wandering, as a girl, in her native woods. Since her retirement to Cherbury, reading had been her chief resource. The hall contained a library whose shelves, indeed,

were more full than choice ; but, amid folios of theological controversy and civil law, there might be found the first editions of most of the celebrated writers of the reign of Anne, which the contemporary proprietor of Cherbury, a man of wit and fashion in his day, had duly collected in his yearly visits to the metropolis, and finally deposited in the family book-room.

The education of her daughter was not only the principal duty of Lady Annabel, but her chief delight. To cultivate the nascent intelligence of a child, in those days, was not the mere piece of scientific mechanism that the admirable labours of so many ingenious writers have since permitted it comparatively to become. In those days there was no Mrs. Barbauld, no Madame de Genlis, no Miss Edgeworth ; no "Evenings at Home," no "Children's Friend," no "Parent's Assistant." Venetia loved her book ; indeed, she was never happier than when reading ; but she soon recoiled from the gilt and Lilliputian volumes of the good Mr. Newbury, and her mind required some more substantial excitement than "Tom Thumb," or even "Goody Two-Shoes." "The Seven Champions" was a great resource and a great favourite ; but it required all the vigilance of a mother to eradicate the false impressions which such studies were continually making on so tender a student ; and to disenchant, by rational discussion, the fascinated imagination of her child. Lady Annabel endeavoured to find some substitute in the essays of Addison and Steele ; but they required more knowledge of the every-day world for their enjoyment than an infant, bred in such seclusion, could at present afford ; and at last Venetia lost herself in the wildering pages of *Clelia* and the *Arcadia*, which she pored over with a rapt and ecstatic spirit, that would not comprehend the warning scepticism of her parent. Let us picture to ourselves the high-bred Lady Annabel in the terrace-room of her ancient hall, working at her tapestry, and, seated at her feet, her little daughter Venetia, reading aloud the *Arcadia* ! The peacocks have jumped up on the window-sill, to look at their friends, who love to feed them, and by their pecking have aroused the bloodhound crouching at Lady Annabel's feet. And Venetia looks up from her folio with a flushed and smiling face to catch the sympathy of her mother, who rewards her daughter's study with a kiss. Ah ! there are no such mothers and no such daughters now !

Thus it will be seen that the life and studies of Venetia tended rather dangerously, in spite of all the care of her mother, to the development of her imagination, in case indeed she possessed that terrible and fatal gift. She passed her days in unbroken solitude, or broken only by affections which softened her heart, and in a scene which itself might well promote any predisposition of the

mind; beautiful and picturesque objects surrounded her on all sides; she wandered, as it were, in an enchanted wilderness, and watched the deer reposing under the green shadow of stately trees; the old hall itself was calculated to excite mysterious curiosity; one wing was uninhabited and shut up; each morning and evening she repaired with her mother and the household through long galleries to the chapel, where she knelt to her devotions, illumined by a window blazoned with the arms of that illustrious family of which she was a member, and of which she knew nothing. She had an indefinite and painful consciousness that she had been early checked in the natural inquiries which occur to every child; she had insensibly been trained to speak only of what she saw; and when she listened, at night, to the long ivy rustling about the windows, and the wild owls hooting about the mansion, with their pining, melancholy voices, she might have been excused for believing in those spirits, which her mother warned her to discredit; or she forgot these mournful impressions in dreams, caught from her romantic volumes, of bright knights and beautiful damsels.

Only one event of importance had occurred at Cherbury during these two years, if indeed that be not too strong a phrase to use in reference to an occurrence which occasioned so slight and passing an interest. Lord Cadurcis had died. He had left his considerable property to his natural children, but the abbey had descended with the title to a very distant relative. The circle at Cherbury had heard, and that was all, that the new lord was a minor, a little boy, indeed very little older than Venetia herself; but this information produced no impression. The abbey was still deserted and desolate as ever.

CHAPTER IV.

EVERY Sunday afternoon, the rector of a neighbouring though still somewhat distant parish, of which the rich living was in the gift of the Herberts, came to perform divine service at Cherbury. It was a subject of deep regret to Lady Annabel that herself and her family were debarred from the advantage of more frequent and convenient spiritual consolation; but, at this time, the parochial discipline of the Church of England was not so strict as it fortunately is at present. Cherbury, though a vicarage, possessed neither parish church, nor a residence for the clergyman; nor was there indeed a village. The peasants on the estate, or labourers as they are now styled, a term whose introduction into our rural world is much to be lamented, lived in the respective farm-houses on the lands which they cultivated. These were scattered about at con-

siderable distances, and many of their inmates found it more convenient to attend the church of the contiguous parish than to repair to the hall chapel, where the household and the dwellers in the few cottages scattered about the park and woods always assembled. The Lady Annabel, whose lot it had been in life to find her best consolation in religion, and who was influenced by not only a sincere but even a severe piety, had no other alternative, therefore, but engaging a chaplain; but this, after much consideration, she had resolved not to do. She was indeed her own chaplain, herself performing each day such parts of our morning and evening service whose celebration becomes a laic, and reading portions from the writings of those eminent divines who, from the Restoration to the conclusion of the last reign, have so eminently distinguished the communion of our national Church.

Each Sunday, after the performance of divine service, the Rev. Dr. Masham dined with the family, and he was the only guest at Cherbury Venetia ever remembered seeing. The Doctor was a regular orthodox divine of the eighteenth century; with a large cauliflower wig, shovel-hat, and huge knee-buckles, barely covered by his top-boots; learned, jovial, humorous, and somewhat courtly; truly pious, but not enthusiastic; not forgetful of his tithes, but generous and charitable when they were once paid; never neglecting the sick, yet occasionally following a fox; a fine scholar, an active magistrate, and a good shot; dreading the pope, and hating the presbyterians.

The Doctor was attached to the Herbert family not merely because they had given him a good living. He had a great reverence for an old English race, and turned up his nose at the Walpolian loanmongers. Lady Annabel, too, so beautiful, so dignified, so amiable, and highly bred, and, above all, so pious, had won his regard. He was not a little proud, too, that he was the only person in the county who had the honour of her acquaintance, and yet was disinterested enough to regret that she led so secluded a life, and often lamented that nothing would induce her to show her elegant person on a race-course, or to attend an assize ball, an assembly which was then becoming much the fashion. The little Venetia was a charming child, and the kind-hearted Doctor, though a bachelor, loved children;

“O! *matre pulchrâ, filia pulchrior,*”

was the Rev. Dr. Masham’s apposite and favourite quotation after his weekly visit to Cherbury.

Divine service was concluded; the Doctor had preached a capital sermon; for he had been one of the shining lights of his university until his rich but isolating preferment had apparently

closed the great career which it was once supposed awaited him. The accustomed walk on the terrace was completed, and dinner was announced. This meal was always celebrated at Cherbury, where new fashions stole down with a lingering pace, in the great hall itself. An ample table was placed in the centre on a mat of rushes, sheltered by a large screen covered with huge maps of the shire and the neighbouring counties. The Lady Annabel and her good pastor seated themselves at each end of the table, while Venetia, mounted on a high chair, was waited on by Mistress Pauncefort, who never condescended by any chance attention to notice the presence of any other individual but her little charge, on whose chair she just leaned with an air of condescending devotion. The butler stood behind his lady, and two other servants watched the Doctor; rural bodies all, but decked on this day in gorgeous livery coats of blue and silver, which had been made originally for men of very different size and bearing. Simple as was the usual diet at Cherbury the cook was permitted on Sunday full play to her art, which, in the eighteenth century, indulged in the production of dishes more numerous and substantial than our refined tastes could at present tolerate. The Doctor appreciated a good dinner, and his countenance glistened with approbation as he surveyed the ample turcen of potage royal, with a boned duck swimming in its centre. Before him still scowled in death the grim countenance of a huge roast pike, flanked on one side by a leg of mutton *à-la-daube*, and on the other by the tempting delicacies of bombarded veal. To these succeeded that masterpiece of the culinary art, a grand battalia pie, in which the bodies of chickens, pigeons, and rabbits were embalmed in spices, cocks' combs, and savory balls, and well bedewed with one of those rich sauces of claret, anchovy, and sweet herbs, in which our great-grandfathers delighted, and which was technically termed a Lear. But the grand essay of skill was the cover of this pasty, whereon the curious cook had contrived to represent all the once-living forms that were now entombed in that gorgeous sepulchre. A Florentine tourte, or tansy, an old English custard, a more refined blamango, and a riband jelly of many colours, offered a pleasant relief after these vaster inventions, and the repast closed with a dish of oyster loaves and a pompetone of larks.

Notwithstanding the abstemiousness of his hostess, the Doctor was never deterred from doing justice to her hospitality. Few were the dishes that ever escaped him. The demon dyspepsia had not waved its fell wings over the eighteenth century, and wonderful were the feats then achieved by a country gentleman with the united aid of a good digestion and a good conscience.

The servants had retired, and Dr. Masham had taken his last glass of port, and then he rang a bell on the table, and—I trust my

fair readers will not be frightened from proceeding with this history—a servant brought him his pipe. The pipe was well studded, duly lighted, and duly puffed; and then, taking it from his mouth, the Doctor spoke.

“And so, my honoured lady, you have got a neighbour at last.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed Lady Annabel.

But the claims of the pipe prevented the good Doctor from too quickly satisfying her natural curiosity. Another puff or two, and he then continued.

“Yes,” said he, “the old abbey has at last found a tenant.”

“A tenant, Doctor?”

“Ay! the best tenant in the world—its proprietor.”

“You quite surprise me. When did this occur?”

“They have been there these three days; I have paid them a visit. Mrs. Cadureis has come to live at the abbey with the little lord.”

“This is indeed news to us,” said Lady Annabel; “and what kind of people are they?”

“You know, my dear madam,” said the Doctor, just touching the ash of his pipe with his tobacco-stopper of chased silver, “that the present Lord is a very distant relative of the late one?”

Lady Annabel bowed assent.

“The late Lord,” continued the Doctor, “who was as strange and wrong-headed a man as ever breathed, though I trust he is in the kingdom of heaven for all that, left all his property to his unlawful children, with the exception of this estate entailed on the title, as all estates should be. ’Tis a fine place, but no great rental. I doubt whether ’tis more than a clear twelve hundred a-year.”

“And Mrs. Cadureis?” inquired Lady Annabel.

“Was an heiress,” replied the Doctor, “and the late Mr. Cadureis a spendthrift. He was a bad manager, and, worse, a bad husband. Providence was pleased to summon him suddenly from this mortal scene, but not before he had dissipated the greater part of his wife’s means. Mrs. Cadureis, since she was a widow, has lived in strict seclusion with her little boy, as you may, my dear lady, with your dear little girl. But I am afraid,” said the Doctor, shaking his head, “she has not been in the habit of dining so well as we have to-day. A very limited income, my dear madam; a very limited income indeed. And the guardians, I am told, will only allow the little lord a hundred a-year; but, on her own income, whatever it may be, and that addition, she has resolved to live at the abbey; and I believe—I believe she has it rent-free; but I don’t know.”

“Poor woman!” said Lady Annabel, and not without a sigh. “I trust her child is her consolation.”

Venetia had not spoken during this conversation, but she had listened to it very attentively. At length she said, "Mamma, is not a widow a wife that has lost her husband?"

"You are right, my dear," said Lady Annabel, rather gravely.

Venetia mused a moment, and then replied, "Pray, mamma, are you a widow?"

"My dear little girl," said Dr. Masham, "go and give that beautiful peacock a pretty piece of cake."

Lady Annabel and the Doctor rose from the table with Venetia, and took a turn in the park, while the Doctor's horses were getting ready.

"I think, my good lady," said the Doctor, "it would be but an act of Christian charity to call upon Mrs. Cadurcis."

"I was thinking the same," said Lady Annabel; "I am interested by what you have told me of her history and fortunes. We have some woes in common—I hope some joys. It seems that this case should indeed be an exception to my rule."

"I would not ask you to sacrifice your inclinations to the mere pleasures of the world," said the Doctor: "but duties, my dear lady, duties; there are such things as duties to our neighbour; and here is a case where, believe me, they might be fulfilled."

The Doctor's horses now appeared. Both master and groom wore their pistols in their holsters. The Doctor shook hands warmly with Lady Annabel, and patted Venetia on her head, as she ran up from a little distance, with an eager countenance, to receive her accustomed blessing. Then mounting his stout mare, he once more waved his hand with an air of courtliness to his hostess, and was soon out of sight. Lady Annabel and Venetia returned to the terrace-room.

CHAPTER V.

"AND so I would, my lady," said Mistress Pouncefort, when Lady Annabel communicated to her faithful attendant, at night, the news of the arrival of the Cadurcis family at the abbey, and her intention of paying Mrs. Cadurcis a visit; "and so I would, my lady," said Mistress Pouncefort, "and it would be but an act of Christian charity after all, as the Doctor says; for although it is not for me to complain when my betters are satisfied, and after all I am always content, if your ladyship be; still there is no denying the fact, that this is a terrible lonesome life after all. And I cannot help thinking your ladyship has not been looking so well of late, and a little society would do your ladyship good; and Miss Venetia too, after all, she wants a playfellow; I am certain sure that I was as tired of playing at ball with her this morning as if I had never sat down in

my born days; and I dare say the little lord will play with her all day long."

"If I thought that this visit would lead to what is understood by the word society, my good Pauncefort, I certainly should refrain from paying it," said Lady Annabel, very quietly.

"Oh! Lord, dear my lady, I was not for a moment dreaming of any such thing," replied Mistress Pauncefort; "society, I know as well as any one, means grand balls, Ranelagh, and the masquerades. I can't abide the thought of them, I do assure your ladyship; all I meant was that a quiet dinner now and then with a few friends, a dance perhaps in the evening, or a hand of whisk, or a game of romps at Christmas, when the abbey will of course be quite full, a——"

"I believe there is as little chance of the abbey being full at Christmas, or any other time, as there is of Cherbury," said Lady Annabel. "Mrs. Cadurcis is a widow, with a very slender fortune. Her son will not enjoy his estate until he is of age, and its rental is small. I am led to believe that they will live quite as quietly as ourselves; and when I spoke of Christian charity, I was thinking only of kindness towards them, and not of amusement for ourselves."

"Well, my lady, your la'ship knows best," replied Mistress Pauncefort, evidently very disappointed; for she had indulged in momentary visions of noble visitors and noble valets; "I am always content, you know, when your la'ship is; but, I must say, I think it is very odd for a lord to be so poor. I never heard of such a thing. I think they will turn out richer than you have an idea, my lady. Your la'ship knows 'tis quite a saying, 'As rich as a lord.'"

Lady Annabel smiled, but did not reply.

The next morning the fawn-coloured chariot, which had rarely been used since Lady Annabel's arrival at Cherbury, and four black long-tailed coach-horses, that from absolute necessity had been degraded, in the interval, to the service of the cart and the plough, made their appearance, after much bustle and effort, before the hall-door. Although a morning's stroll from Cherbury through the woods, Cadurcis was distant nearly ten miles by the road, and that road was in great part impassable, save in favourable seasons. This visit, therefore, was an expedition; and Lady Annabel, fearing the fatigue for a child, determined to leave Venetia at home, from whom she had actually never been separated one hour in her life. Venetia could not refrain from shedding a tear when her mother embraced and quitted her, and begged, as a last favour, that she might accompany her through the park to the avenue lodge. So Pauncefort and herself entered the chariot, that rocked

like a ship, in spite of all the skill of the coachman and the postilion.

Venetia walked home with Mistress Pouncefort, but Lady Annabel's little daughter was not in her usual lively spirits; many a butterfly glanced around without attracting her pursuit, and the deer trooped by without eliciting a single observation. At length she said, in a very thoughtful tone, "Mistress Pouncefort, I should have liked to have gone and seen the little boy."

"You shall go and see him another day, Miss," replied her attendant.

"Mistress Pouncefort," said Venetia, "are you a widow?"

Mistress Pouncefort almost started; had the inquiry been made by a man, she would almost have supposed he was going to be very rude. She was indeed very much surprised.

"And pray, Miss Venetia, what could put it in your head to ask such an odd question?" exclaimed Mistress Pouncefort. "A widow! Miss Venetia; I have never yet changed my name, and I shall not in a hurry, that I can tell you."

"Do widows change their names?" said Venetia.

"All women change their names when they marry," responded Mistress Pouncefort.

"Is mamma married?" inquired Venetia.

"La! Miss Venetia. Well, to be sure, you do ask the strangest questions. Married! to be sure she is married," said Mistress Pouncefort, exceedingly flustered.

"And whom is she married to?" pursued the unwearied Venetia.

"Your papa, to be sure," said Mistress Pouncefort, blushing up to her eyes, and looking very confused; "that is to say, Miss Venetia, you are never to ask questions about such subjects. Have not I often told you it is not pretty?"

"Why is it not pretty?" said Venetia.

"Because it is not proper," said Mistress Pouncefort; "because your mamma does not like you to ask such questions, and she will be very angry with me for answering them, I can tell you that."

"I tell you what, Mistress Pouncefort," said Venetia, "I think mamma is a widow."

"And what then, Miss Venetia? There is no shame in that."

"Shame!" exclaimed Venetia. "What is shame?"

"Look, there is a pretty butterfly!" exclaimed Mistress Pouncefort. "Did you ever see such a pretty butterfly, Miss?"

"I do not care about butterflies, to-day, Mistress Pouncefort; I like to talk about widows."

"Was there ever such a child!" exclaimed Mistress Pouncefort, with a wondering glance.

"I must have had a papa," said Venetia, "all the ladies I read about had papas, and married husbands. Then whom did my mamma marry?"

"Lord! Miss Venetia, you know very well your mamma always tells you that all those books you read are a pack of stories," observed Mistress Pouncefort, with an air of triumphant art.

"There never were such persons, perhaps," said Venetia, "but it is not true that there never were such things as papas and husbands, for all people have papas; you must have had a papa, Mistress Pouncefort?"

"To be sure I had," said Mistress Pouncefort, bristling up.

"And a mamma too?" said Venetia.

"As honest a woman as ever lived," said Mistress Pouncefort.

"Then if I have no papa, mamma must be a wife that has lost her husband, and that, mamma told me at dinner yesterday, was a widow."

"Was the like ever seen!" exclaimed Mistress Pouncefort. "And what then, Miss Venetia?"

"It seems to me so odd that only two people should live here, and both be widows," said Venetia, "and both have a little child; the only difference is, that one is a little boy, and I am a little girl."

"When ladies lose their husbands, they do not like to have their names mentioned," said Mistress Pouncefort; "and so you must never talk of your papa to my lady, and that is the truth."

"I will not now," said Venetia.

When they returned home, Mistress Pouncefort brought her work, and seated herself on the terrace, that she might not lose sight of her charge. Venetia played about for some little time; she made a castle behind a tree, and fancied she was a knight, and then a lady, and conjured up an ogre in the neighbouring shrubbery; but these day-dreams did not amuse her as much as usual. She went and fetched her book, but even "The Seven Champions" could not interest her. Her eye was fixed upon the page, and apparently she was absorbed in her pursuit, but her mind wandered, and the page was never turned. She indulged in an unconscious reverie; her fancy was with her mother on her visit; the old abbey rose up before her: she painted the scene without an effort: the court, with the fountain; the grand room, with the tapestry hangings; that desolate garden, with the fallen statues; and that long, gloomy gallery. And in all these scenes appeared that little boy, who, somehow or other, seemed wonderfully blended with her imaginings. It was a very long day this; Venetia dined alone with Mistress Pouncefort; the time hung very heavy; at length she fell asleep in Mistress Pouncefort's lap. A sound

roused her,—the carriage had returned; she ran to greet her mother, but there was no news;—Mrs. Cadurcis had been absent; she had gone to a distant town to buy some furniture; and, after all, Lady Annabel had not seen the little boy.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW days after the visit to Cadurcis, when Lady Annabel was sitting alone, a post-chaise drove up to the hall, whence issued a short and very stout woman with a rubicund countenance, and dressed in a style which remarkably blended the shabby with the tawdry. She was accompanied by a boy between eleven and twelve years of age, whose appearance, however, very much contrasted with that of his mother, for he was pale and slender, with long curling black hair and large black eyes, which occasionally, by their transient flashes, agreeably relieved a face the general expression of which might be esteemed somewhat shy and sullen. The lady, of course, was Mrs. Cadurcis, who was received by Lady Annabel with the greatest courtesy.

“A terrible journey,” exclaimed Mrs. Cadurcis, fanning herself as she took her seat, “and so very hot! Plantagenet, my love, make your bow; have not I always told you to make a bow when you enter a room, especially where there are strangers? This is Lady Annabel Herbert, who was so kind as to call upon us. Make your bow to Lady Annabel.”

The boy gave a sort of sulky nod, but Lady Annabel received it so graciously and expressed herself so kindly to him that his features relaxed a little, though he was quite silent and sat on the edge of his chair, the picture of dogged indifference.

“Charming country, Lady Annabel,” said Mrs. Cadurcis, “but worse roads, if possible, than we had in Northumberland, where, indeed, there were no roads at all. Cherbury a delightful place, very unlike the abbey; dreadfully lonesome I assure you I find it, Lady Annabel. Great change for us from a little town and all our kind neighbours. Very different from Morpeth; is it not, Plantagenet?”

“Hate Morpeth,” said the boy.

“Hate Morpeth!” exclaimed Mrs. Cadurcis, “well, I am sure, that is very ungrateful, with so many kind friends as we always found. Besides, Plantagenet, have I not always told you that you are to hate nothing? It is very wicked. The trouble it costs me, Lady Annabel, to educate this dear child!” continued Mrs. Cadurcis, turning to Lady Annabel, and speaking in a semi-tone. “I have

done it all myself, I assure you ; and, when he likes, he can be as good as any one. Can't you, Plantagenet ? ”

Lord Cadurcis gave a grim smile ; seated himself at the very back of the deep chair and swung his feet, which no longer reached the ground, to and fro.

“ I am sure that Lord Cadurcis always behaves well,” said Lady Annabel.

“ There, Plantagenet,” exclaimed Mrs. Cadurcis, “ only listen to that. Hear what Lady Annabel Herbert says ; she is sure you always behave well. Now mind, never give her ladyship cause to change her opinion.”

Plantagenet curled his lip, and half turned his back on his companions.

“ I regretted so much that I was not at home when you did me the honour to call,” resumed Mrs. Cadurcis ; “ but I had gone over for the day to Southport, buying furniture. What a business it is to buy furniture, Lady Annabel ! ” added Mrs. Cadurcis, with a piteous expression.

“ It is indeed very troublesome,” said Lady Annabel.

“ Ah ! you have none of these cares,” continued Mrs. Cadurcis, surveying the pretty apartment. “ What a difference between Cherbury and the abbey ! I suppose you have never been there ? ”

“ Indeed, it is one of my favourite walks,” answered Lady Annabel ; “ and, some two years ago, I even took the liberty of walking through the house.”

“ Was there ever such a place ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Cadurcis. “ I assure you my poor head turns, whenever I try to find my way about it. But the trustees offered it us, and I thought it my duty to my son to reside there. Besides, it was a great offer to a widow ; if poor Mr. Cadurcis had been alive it would have been different. I hardly know what I shall do there, particularly in winter. My spirits are always dreadfully low. I only hope Plantagenet will behave well. If he goes into his tantrums at the abbey, and particularly in winter, I hardly know what will become of me ! ”

“ I am sure Lord Cadurcis will do every thing to make the abbey comfortable to you. Besides, it is but a very short walk from Cherbury, and you must come very often and see us.”

“ Oh ! Plantagenet can be good if he likes, I can assure you, Lady Annabel ; and behaves as properly as any little boy I know. Plantagenet, my dear, speak. Have not I always told you, when you pay a visit, that you should open your mouth now and then. I don't like chatting children,” added Mrs. Cadurcis, “ but I like them to answer when they are spoken to.”

“ Nobody has spoken to me,” said Lord Cadurcis, in a sullen tone.

"Plantagenet, my love!" said his mother in a solemn voice.

"Well, mother, what do you want?"

"Plantagenet, my love, you know you promised me to be good!"

"Well! what have I done?"

"Lord Cadurcis," said Lady Annabel, interfering, "do you like to look at pictures?"

"Thank you," replied the little lord, in a more courteous tone, "I like to be left alone."

"Did you ever know such an odd child!" said Mrs. Cadurcis; "and yet, Lady Annabel, you must not judge him by what you see. I do assure you he can behave, when he likes, as pretty as possible."

"Pretty!" muttered the little lord between his teeth.

"If you had only seen him at Morpeth sometimes at a little tea party," said Mrs. Cadurcis, "he really was quite the ornament of the company."

"No, I wasn't," said Lord Cadurcis.

"Plantagenet!" said his mother again in a solemn tone, "have I not always told you that you are never to contradict any one?"

The little lord indulged in a suppressed growl.

"There was a little play last Christmas," continued Mrs. Cadurcis, "and he acted quite delightfully. Now you would not think that, from the way he sits upon that chair. Plantagenet, my dear, I do insist upon your behaving yourself. Sit like a man."

"I am not a man," said Lord Cadurcis, very quietly; "I wish I were."

"Plantagenet!" said the mother, "have not I always told you that you are never to answer me? It is not proper for children to answer! O Lady Annabel, if you knew what it cost me to educate my son. He never does anything I wish, and it is so provoking, because I know that he can behave as properly as possible if he likes. He does it to provoke me,—you know you do it to provoke me, you little brat; now, sit properly, sir; I do desire you to sit properly. How vexatious that you should call at Cherbury for the first time, and behave in this manner! Plantagenet, do you hear me?" exclaimed Mrs. Cadurcis, with a face reddening to scarlet, and almost menacing a move from her seat.

"Yes, everybody hears you, Mrs. Cadurcis," said the little lord.

"Don't call me Mrs. Cadurcis," exclaimed the mother, in a dreadful rage. "That is not the way to speak to your mother—I will not be called Mrs. Cadurcis by you. Don't answer me, sir; I desire you not to answer me. I have half a mind to get up and give you a good shake, that I have. O Lady Annabel," sighed Mrs. Cadurcis, while a tear trickled down her cheek, "if you only knew the life I lead, and what trouble it costs me to educate that child!"

"My dear madam," said Lady Annabel, "I am sure that Lord

Cadurcis has no other wish but to please you. Indeed you have misunderstood him."

"Yes! she always misunderstands me," said Lord Cadurcis, in a softer tone, but with pouting lips and suffused eyes.

"Now he is going on," said his mother, beginning herself to cry dreadfully. "He knows my weak heart; he knows nobody in the world loves him like his mother; and this is the way he treats me."

"My dear Mrs. Cadurcis," said Lady Annabel, "pray take luncheon after your long drive; and Lord Cadurcis, I am sure you must be fatigued."

"Thank you, I never eat, my dear lady," said Mrs. Cadurcis, "except at my meals. But one glass of Mountain, if you please, I would just take the liberty of tasting, for the weather is so dreadfully hot; and Plantagenet has so aggravated me, I really do not feel myself."

Lady Annabel sounded her silver hand-bell, and the butler brought some cakes and the Mountain. Mrs. Cadurcis revived by virtue of her single glass, and the providential co-operation of a subsequent one or two. Even the cakes and the Mountain, however, would not tempt her son to open his mouth; and this, in spite of her returning composure, drove her to desperation. A conviction that the Mountain and the cakes were delicious, an amiable desire that the palate of her spoiled child should be gratified, some reasonable maternal anxiety that after so long and fatiguing a drive he in fact needed some refreshment, and the agonising consciousness that all her own physical pleasure at the moment was destroyed by the mental sufferings she endured at having quarrelled with her son, and that he was depriving himself of what was so agreeable only to pique her, quite overwhelmed the ill-regulated mind of this fond mother. Between each sip and each mouthful, she appealed to him to follow her example, now with cajolery, now with menace, till at length, worked up by the united stimulus of the Mountain and her own ungovernable rage, she dashed down the glass and unfinished slice of cake, and, before the astonished Lady Annabel, rushed forward to give him what she had long threatened, and what she in general ultimately had recourse to—a good shake.

Her agile son, experienced in these storms, escaped in time, and pushed his chair before his infuriated mother; Mrs. Cadurcis, however rallied, and chased him round the room; once more she flattered herself she had captured him, once more he evaded her; in her despair she took up Venetia's "Seven Champions," and threw the volume at his head; he laughed a fiendish laugh, as, ducking his head, the book flew on, and dashed through a pane of glass; Mrs. Cadurcis made a desperate charge, and her son, a little

frightened at her almost maniacal passion, saved himself by suddenly seizing Lady Annabel's work-table, and whirling it before her; Mrs. Cadurcis fell over the leg of the table, and went into hysterics; while the blood-hound, who had long started from his repose, looked at his mistress for instructions, and in the meantime continued barking. The astonished and agitated Lady Annabel assisted Mrs. Cadurcis to rise, and led her to a couch. Lord Cadurcis, pale and dogged, stood in a corner, and after all this uproar there was a comparative calm, only broken by the sobs of the mother, each instant growing fainter and fainter.

At this moment the door opened, and Mistress Pauncefort ushered in the little Venetia. She really looked like an angel of peace sent from heaven on a mission of concord, with her long golden hair, her bright face, and smile of ineffable loveliness.

"Mamma!" said Venetia, in the sweetest tone.

"Hush! darling," said Lady Annabel, "this lady is not very well."

Mrs. Cadurcis opened her eyes and sighed. She beheld Venetia, and stared at her with a feeling of wonder. "O Lady Annabel," she faintly exclaimed, "what must you think of me! But was there ever such an unfortunate mother! and I have not a thought in the world but for that boy. I have devoted my life to him, and never would have buried myself in this abbey but for his sake. And this is the way he treats me, and his father before him treated me even worse. Am I not the most unfortunate woman you ever knew?"

"My dear madam," said the kind Lady Annabel, in a soothing tone, "you will be very happy yet; all will be quite right and quite happy."

"Is this angel your child?" inquired Mrs. Cadurcis, in a low voice.

"This is my little girl—Venetia. Come hither, Venetia, and speak to Mrs. Cadurcis."

"How do you do, Mrs. Cadurcis?" said Venetia. "I am so glad you have come to live at the abbey."

"The angel!" exclaimed Mrs. Cadurcis. "The sweet seraph! Oh! why did not my Plantagenet speak to you, Lady Annabel, in the same tone? And he can, if he likes;—he can, indeed. It was his silence that so mortified me; it was his silence that led to all. I am so proud of him! and then he comes here, and never speaks a word. O Plantagenet, I am sure you will break my heart."

Venetia went up to the little lord in the corner, and gently stroked his dark cheek. "Are you the little boy?" she said.

Cadurcis looked at her; at first the glance was rather fierce, but

it instantly relaxed. "What is your name?" he said in a low, but not unkind, tone.

"Venetia."

"I like you, Venetia," said the boy. "Do you live here?"

"Yes, with my mamma."

"I like your mamma, too; but not so much as you: I like your gold hair."

"Oh, how funny! to like my gold hair!"

"If you had come in sooner," said Cadurcis, "we should not have had this row."

"What is a row, little boy?" said Venetia.

"Do not call me little boy," he said, but not in an unkind tone; "call me by my name."

"What is your name?"

"Lord Cadurcis; but you may call me by my Christian name, because I like you."

"What is your Christian name?"

"Plantagenet."

"Plantagenet! What a long name!" said Venetia. "Tell me, then, Plantagenet, what is a row?"

"What often takes place between me and my mother, but which I am very sorry now has happened here, for I like this place, and should like to come often. A row is a quarrel."

"A quarrel! What! do you quarrel with your mamma?"

"Often."

"Why, then, you are not a good boy."

"Ah! my mamma is not like yours," said the little lord, with a sigh. "It is not my fault. But now I want to make it up; how shall I do it?"

"Go and give her a kiss."

"Poh! that is not the way."

"Shall I go and ask my mamma what is best to do?" said Venetia; and she stole away on tiptoe, and whispered to Lady Annabel that Plantagenet wanted her. Her mother came forward and invited Lord Cadurcis to walk on the terrace with her, leaving Venetia to amuse her other guest.

Lady Annabel, though very kind, was very frank and firm in her unexpected confidential interview with her new friend. She placed before him very clearly the enormity of his conduct, which no provocation could justify; it was a violation of divine law, as well as human propriety. She found the little lord attentive, tractable, and repentant, and, what might not have been expected, exceedingly ingenious and intelligent. His observations, indeed, were distinguished by remarkable acuteness; and though he could not,

and indeed did not even attempt to vindicate his conduct, he incidentally introduced much that might be urged in its extenuation. There was, indeed, in this his milder moment, something very winning in his demeanour, and Lady Annabel deeply regretted that a nature of so much promise and capacity should, by the injudicious treatment of a parent, at once fond and violent, afford such slight hopes of future happiness. It was arranged between Lord Cadurcis and Lady Annabel that she should lead him to his mother, and that he should lament the past, and ask her forgiveness; so they re-entered the room. Venetia was listening to a very long story from Mrs. Cadurcis, who appeared to have entirely recovered herself; but her countenance assumed a befitting expression of grief and gravity when she observed her son.

"My dear madam," said Lady Annabel, "your son is very unhappy that he should have offended you, and he has asked my kind offices to effect a perfect reconciliation between a child who wishes to be dutiful to a parent who, he feels, has always been so affectionate."

Mrs. Cadurcis began crying.

"Mother," said her son, "I am sorry for what has occurred; mine was the fault. I shall not be happy till you pardon me."

"No, yours was not the fault," said poor Mrs. Cadurcis, crying very bitterly. "Oh! no, it was not! I was in fault, only I. There, Lady Annabel, did I not tell you he was the sweetest, dearest, most generous-hearted creature that ever lived? Oh! if he would only always speak so, I am sure I should be the happiest woman that ever breathed! He puts me in mind quite of his poor dear father, who was an angel upon earth; he was indeed, when he was not vexed. O my dear Plantagenet! my only hope and joy! you are the treasure and consolation of my life, and always will be. God bless you, my darling child! You shall have that pony you wanted; I am sure I can manage it: I did not think I could."

As Lady Annabel thought it was as well that the mother and the son should not be immediately thrown together after this storm, she very kindly proposed that they should remain, and pass the day at Cherbury; and as Plantagenet's eyes brightened at the proposal, it did not require much trouble to persuade his mother to accede to it. The day, that had commenced so inauspiciously, turned out one of the most agreeable, both to Mrs. Cadurcis and her child. The two mothers conversed together, and, as Mrs. Cadurcis was a great workwoman, there was at least one bond of sympathy between her and the tapestry of her hostess. Then they all took a stroll in the park; and as Mrs. Cadurcis was not able to walk for any length of time, the children were permitted to stroll about together, attended by Mistress Pouncefort, while Mrs. Cadurcis, chatting without ceasing, detailed to Lady Annabel all the

history of her life, all the details of her various complaints and her economical arrangements, and all the secrets of her husband's treatment of her,—that favourite subject on which she ever waxed most eloquent. Plantagenet, equally indulging in confidence, which with him, however, was very unusual, poured all his soul into the charmed ear of Venetia. He told her how he and his mother had lived at Morpeth, and how he hated it; how poor they had been, and how rich he should be; how he loved the abbey, and especially the old gallery, and the drums and armour; how he had been a day-scholar at a little school which he abhorred, and how he was to go some day to Eton, of which he was very proud.

At length they were obliged to return, and when dinner was over the post-chaise was announced. Mrs. Cadurcis parted from Lady Annabel with all the warm expressions of a heart naturally kind and generous; and Plantagenet embraced Venetia, and promised that the next day he would find his way alone from Cadurcis, through the wood, and come and take another walk with her

CHAPTER VII.

THIS settlement of Mrs. Cadurcis and her son in the neighbourhood was an event of no slight importance in the life of the family at Cherbury. Venetia at length found a companion of her own age, itself an incident which, in its influence upon her character and pursuits, was not to be disregarded. There grew up between the little lord and the daughter of Lady Annabel that fond intimacy which not rarely occurs in childhood. Plantagenet and Venetia quickly imbibed for each other a singular affection, not displeasing to Lady Annabel, who observed, without dissatisfaction, the increased happiness of her child, and encouraged by her kindness the frequent visits of the boy, who soon learnt the shortest road from the abbey, and almost daily scaled the hill, and traced his way through the woods, to the hall. There was much, indeed, in the character and the situation of Lord Cadurcis which interested Lady Annabel Herbert. His mild, engaging, and affectionate manners, when he was removed from the injudicious influence of his mother, won upon her feelings; she felt for this lone child, whom nature had gifted with so soft a heart and with a thoughtful mind whose outbreaks not unfrequently attracted her notice; with none to guide him, and with only one heart to look up to for fondness; and that, too, one that had already contrived to forfeit the respect even of so young a child.

Yet Lady Annabel was too sensible of the paramount claims of a mother—herself, indeed, too jealous of any encroachment on the

full privileges of maternal love—to sanction in the slightest degree, by her behaviour, any neglect of Mrs. Cadurcis by her son. For his sake, therefore, she courted the society of her new neighbour; and although Mrs. Cadurcis offered little to engage Lady Annabel's attention as a companion, though she was violent in her temper, far from well informed, and—from the society in which, in spite of her original good birth, her later years had passed—very far from being refined, she was not without her good qualities. She was generous, kind-hearted, and grateful; not insensible of her own deficiencies, and respectable from her misfortunes. Lady Annabel was one of those who always judged individuals rather by their good qualities than their bad. With the exception of her violent temper, which—under the control of Lady Annabel's presence, and by the aid of all that kind person's skilful management—Mrs. Cadurcis generally contrived to bridle, her principal faults were those of manner, which, from the force of habit, every day became less painful. Mrs. Cadurcis—who, indeed, was only a child of a larger growth—became scarcely less attached to the Herbert family than her son; she felt that her life, under their influence, was happier and serener than of yore; that there were less domestic broils than in old days; that her son was more dutiful; and, as she could not help suspecting, though she found it difficult to analyse the cause, herself more amiable. The truth was, Lady Annabel always treated Mrs. Cadurcis with studied respect; and the children, and especially Venetia, followed her example. Mrs. Cadurcis' self-complacency was not only less shocked, but more gratified, than before; and this was the secret of her happiness. For no one was more mortified by her rages, when they were past, than Mrs. Cadurcis herself; she felt they compromised her dignity, and had lost her all moral command over a child whom she loved at the bottom of her heart with a kind of wild passion, though she would menace and strike him, and who often precipitated these paroxysms by denying his mother that duty and affection which were, after all, the great charm and pride of her existence.

As Mrs. Cadurcis was unable to walk to Cherbury, and as Plantagenet soon fell into the habit of passing every morning at the hall, Lady Annabel was frequent in her visits to the mother, and soon she persuaded Mrs. Cadurcis to order the old post-chaise regularly on Saturday, and remain at Cherbury until the following Monday; by these means both families united together in the chapel at divine service, while the presence of Dr. Masham, at their now increased Sunday dinner, was an incident in the monotonous life of Mrs. Cadurcis far from displeasing to her. The Doctor gave her a little news of the neighbourhood, and of the country in general; amused her with an occasional anecdote of the Queen and the young

Princesses; and always lent her the last number of "Sylvanus Urban."

This weekly visit to Cherbury, the great personal attention which she always received there, and the frequent morning walks of Lady Annabel to the abbey, effectually repressed on the whole the jealousy which was a characteristic of Mrs. Cadurcis' nature, and which the constant absence of her son from her in the mornings might otherwise have fatally developed. But Mrs. Cadurcis could not resist the conviction that the Herberts were as much her friends as her child's; her jealousy was balanced by her gratitude; she was daily, almost hourly, sensible of some kindness of Lady Annabel, for there were a thousand services in the power of the opulent and ample establishment of Cherbury to afford the limited and desolate household at the abbey. Living in seclusion, it is difficult to refrain from imbibing even a strong regard for our almost solitary companion, however incompatible may be our pursuits, and however our tastes may vary, especially when that companion is grateful, and duly sensible of the condescension of our intimacy. And so it happened that, before a year had elapsed, that very Mrs. Cadurcis, whose first introduction at Cherbury had been so unfavourable to her, and from whose temper and manners the elegant demeanour and the disciplined mind of Lady Annabel Herbert might have been excused for a moment recoiling, had succeeded in establishing a strong hold upon the affections of her refined neighbour, who sought, on every occasion, her society, and omitted few opportunities of contributing to her comfort and welfare.

In the meantime her son was the companion of Venetia, both in her pastimes and studies. The education of Lord Cadurcis had received no further assistance than was afforded by the little grammar-school at Morpeth, where he had passed three or four years as a day-scholar, and where his mother had invariably taken his part on every occasion that he had incurred the displeasure of his master. There he had obtained some imperfect knowledge of Latin; yet the boy was fond of reading, and had picked up, in an odd way, more knowledge than might have been supposed. He had read "Baker's Chronicle," and "The Old Universal History," and "Plutarch;" and had turned over—in the book-room of an old gentleman at Morpeth, who had been attracted by his intelligence—not a few curious old folios, from which he had gleaned no contemptible store of curious instances of human nature. His guardian, whom he had never seen, and who was a great nobleman and lived in London, had signified to Mrs. Cadurcis his intention of sending his ward to Eton; but that time had not yet arrived, and Mrs. Cadurcis, who dreaded parting with her son, determined to postpone it by every maternal artifice in her power. At present it would have

seemed that her son's intellect was to be left utterly uncultivated, for there was no school in the neighbourhood which he could attend, and no occasional assistance which could be obtained; and to the constant presence of a tutor in the house Mrs. Cadurcis was not less opposed than his lordship could have been himself.

It was by degrees that Lord Cadurcis became the partner of Venetia in her studies. Lady Annabel had consulted Dr. Masham about the poor little boy, whose neglected state she deplored; and the good Doctor had offered to ride over to Cherbury at least once a week, besides Sunday, provided Lady Annabel would undertake that his directions, in his absence, should be attended to. This her ladyship promised cheerfully; nor had she any difficulty in persuading Cadurcis to consent to the arrangement. He listened with docility and patience to her representation of the fatal effects, in his after-life, of his neglected education; of the generous and advantageous offer of Dr. Masham; and how cheerfully she would exert herself to assist his endeavours, if Plantagenet would willingly submit to her supervision. The little lord expressed to her his determination to do all that she desired, and voluntarily promised her that she should never repent her goodness. And he kept his word. So every morning, with the full concurrence of Mrs. Cadurcis, whose advice and opinion on the affair were most formally solicited by Lady Annabel, Plantagenet arrived early at the hall, and took his writing and French lessons with Venetia, and then they alternately read aloud to Lady Annabel from the histories of Hooke and Echard. When Venetia repaired to her drawing, Cadurcis sat down to his Latin exercise, and, in encouraging and assisting him, Lady Annabel, a proficient in Italian, began herself to learn the ancient language of the Romans. With such a charming mistress even these Latin exercises were achieved. In vain Cadurcis, after turning leaf over leaf, would look round with a piteous air to his fair assistant—"O Lady Annabel, I am sure the word is not in the dictionary;" Lady Annabel was in a moment at his side, and, by some magic of her fair fingers the word would somehow or other make its appearance. After a little exposure of this kind, Plantagenet would labour with double energy, until, heaving a deep sigh of exhaustion and vexation, he would burst forth—"O Lady Annabel, indeed there is not a nominative case in this sentence." And then Lady Annabel would quit her easel, with her pencil in her hand, and give all her intellect to the puzzling construction; at length, she would say, "I think, Plantagenet, this must be our nominative case;" and so it always was.

Thus, when Wednesday came, the longest and most laborious morning of all Lord Cadurcis' studies, and when he neither wrote, nor read, nor learnt French with Venetia, but gave up all his soul

to Dr. Masham, he usually acquitted himself to that good person's satisfaction, who left him, in general, with commendations that were not lost on the pupil, and plenty of fresh exercises to occupy him and Lady Annabel until the next week. When a year had thus passed away, the happiest year yet in Lord Cadurcis' life, in spite of all his disadvantages, he had contrived to make no inconsiderable progress. Almost deprived of a tutor, he had advanced in classical acquirement more than during the whole of his preceding years of scholarship, while his handwriting began to become intelligible, he could read French with comparative facility, and had turned over many a volume in the well-stored library at Cherbury.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN the hours of study were past, the children, with that zest for play which occupation can alone secure, would go forth together, and wander in the park. Here they had made a little world for themselves, of which no one dreamed; for Venetia had poured forth all her Arcadian lore into the ear of Plantagenet, and they acted together many of the adventures of the romance, under the fond names of Musidorus and Philoclea. Cherbury was Arcadia, and Cadurcis Macedon; while the intervening woods figured as the forests of Thessaly, and the breezy downs were the heights of Pindus. Unwearied was the innocent sport of their virgin imaginations; and it was a great treat if Venetia, attended by Mistress Pauncefort, were permitted to accompany Plantagenet some way on his return. Then they parted with an embrace in the woods of Thessaly, and Musidorus strolled home with a heavy heart to his Macedonian realm.

Parted from Venetia, the magic suddenly seemed to cease, and Musidorus was instantly transformed into the little Lord Cadurcis, exhausted by the unconscious efforts of his fancy, depressed by the separation from his sweet companion, and shrinking from the unpoetical reception which at the best awaited him in his ungenial home. Often, when thus alone, would he loiter on his way and seat himself on the ridge, and watch the setting sun, as its dying glory illumined the turrets of his ancient house, and burnished the waters of the lake, until the tears stole down his cheek; and yet he knew not why. No thoughts of sorrow had flitted through his mind, nor indeed had ideas of any description occurred to him. It was a trance of unmeaning abstraction; all that he felt was a mystical pleasure in watching the sunset, and a conviction that, if he were not with Venetia, that which he loved next best, was to be alone.

The little Cadurcis in general returned home moody and silent, and his mother too often, irritated by his demeanour, indulged in all the expressions of a quick and offended temper ; but since his intimacy with the Herberts, Plantagenet had learnt to control his emotions, and often successfully laboured to prevent those scenes of domestic recrimination once so painfully frequent. There often, too, was a note from Lady Annabel to Mrs. Cadurcis, or some other slight memorial, borne by her son, which enlisted all the kind feelings of that lady in favour of her Cherbury friends, and then the evening was sure to pass over in peace ; and, when Plantagenet was not thus armed, he exerted himself to be cordial ; and so, on the whole, with some skill in management, and some trials of temper, the mother and child contrived to live together with far greater comfort than they had of old.

Bed-time was always a great relief to Plantagenet, for it secured him solitude. He would lie awake for hours, indulging in sweet and unconscious reveries, and brooding over the future morn, that always brought happiness. All that he used to sigh for, was to be Lady Annabel's son ; were he Venetia's brother, then he was sure he never should be for a moment unhappy—that parting from Cherbury, and the gloomy evenings at Cadurcis, would then be avoided. In such a mood, and lying awake upon his pillow, he sought refuge from the painful reality that surrounded him in the creative solace of his imagination. Alone, in his little bed, Cadurcis was Venetia's brother, and he conjured up a thousand scenes in which they were never separated, and wherein he always played an amiable and graceful part. Yet he loved the abbey ; his painful infancy was not associated with that scene ; it was not connected with any of those grovelling common-places of his life, from which he had shrunk back with instinctive disgust, even at a very tender age. Cadurcis was the spot to which, in his most miserable moments at Morpeth, he had always looked forward, as the only chance of emancipation from the distressing scene that surrounded him. He had been brought up with a due sense of his future position, and although he had ever affected a haughty indifference on the subject, from his dislike for the coarse acquaintances who were perpetually reminding him, with chuckling self-complacency, of his future greatness, in secret he had ever brooded over his destiny as his only consolation. He had imbibed from his own reflections, at a very early period of life, a due sense of the importance of his lot ; he was proud of his hereditary honours, blended, as they were, with some glorious passages in the history of his country, and prouder of his still more ancient line. The eccentric exploits and the violent passions, by which his race had been ever charac-

terised, were to him a source of secret exultation. Even the late lord, who certainly had no claims to his gratitude, for he had robbed the inheritance to the utmost of his power, commanded, from the wild decision of his life, the savage respect of his successor. In vain Mrs. Cadureis would pour forth upon this, the favourite theme for her wrath and her lamentations, all the bitter expressions of her rage and woe. Plantagenet had never imbibed her prejudices against the departed, and had often irritated his mother by maintaining that the late lord was perfectly justified in his conduct.

But in these almost daily separations between Plantagenet and Venetia, how different was her lot to that of her companion! She was the confidante of all his domestic sorrows, and often he had requested her to exert her influence to obtain some pacifying missive from Lady Annabel, which might secure him a quiet evening at Cadureis; and whenever this had not been obtained, the last words of Venetia were ever not to loiter, and to remember to speak to his mother as much as he possibly could. Venetia returned to a happy home, welcomed by the smile of a soft and beautiful parent, and with words of affection sweeter than music. She found an engaging companion, who had no thought but for her welfare, her amusement, and her instruction; and often, when the curtains were drawn, the candles lit, and Venetia, holding her mother's hand, opened her book, she thought of poor Plantagenet, so differently situated, with no one to be kind to him, with no one to sympathise with his thoughts, and perhaps at the very moment, goaded into some unhappy quarrel with his mother.

CHAPTER IX.

THE appearance of the Cadureis family on the limited stage of her life, and the engrossing society of her companion, had entirely distracted the thoughts of Venetia from a subject to which in old days they were constantly recurring, and that was her father. By a process which had often perplexed her, and which she could never succeed in analysing, there had arisen in her mind, without any ostensible agency on the part of her mother which she could distinctly recall, a conviction that this was a topic on which she was never to speak. This idea had once haunted her, and she had seldom found herself alone without almost unconsciously musing over it. Notwithstanding the unvarying kindness of Lady Annabel, she exercised over her child a complete and unquestioned control. Venetia was brought up with strictness, which was only not felt to be severe, because the system was founded on the most entire affec-

tion, but, fervent as her love was for her mother, it was equalled by her profound respect, which every word and action of Lady Annabel tended to maintain.

In all the confidential effusions with Plantagenet, Venetia had never dwelt upon this mysterious subject; indeed in these conversations when they treated of their real and not ideal life, Venetia was a mere recipient: all that she could communicate, Plantagenet could observe; he it was who avenged himself at these moments for his habitual silence before third persons; it was to Venetia that he poured forth all his soul, and she was never weary of hearing his stories about Morpeth, and all his sorrows, disgusts, and afflictions. There was scarcely an individual in that little town with whom, from his lively narratives, she was not familiar; and it was to her sympathising heart that he confided all his future hopes and prospects, and confessed the strong pride he experienced in being a Cadureis, which from all others was studiously concealed.

It had happened that the first Christmas-day after the settlement of the Cadureis family at the abbey occurred in the middle of the week; and as the weather was severe, in order to prevent two journeys at such an inclement season, Lady Annabel persuaded Mrs. Cadureis to pass the whole week at the hall. This arrangement gave such pleasure to Plantagenet that the walls of the abbey, as the old post-chaise was preparing for their journey, quite resounded with his merriment. In vain, his mother, harassed with all the mysteries of packing, indulged in a thousand irritable expressions, which at any other time might have produced a broil or even a fray; Cadureis did nothing but laugh. There was at the bottom of this boy's heart, with all his habitual gravity and reserve, a fund of humour which would occasionally break out, and which nothing could withstand. When he was alone with Venetia, he would imitate the old maids of Morpeth, and all the ceremonies of a provincial tea party, with so much life and genuine fun, that Venetia was often obliged to stop in their rambles to indulge her overwhelming mirth. When they were alone, and he was gloomy, she was often accustomed to say, "Now, dear Plantagenet, tell me how the old ladies at Morpeth drink tea."

This morning at the abbey, Cadureis was irresistible, and, the more excited his mother became with the difficulties which beset her, the more gay and fluent were his quips and cranks. Putting, panting, and perspiring, now directing her waiting-woman, now scolding her man-servant, and now ineffectually attempting to box her son's ears, Mrs. Cadureis indeed offered a most ridiculous spectacle.

"John!" screamed Mrs. Cadureis, in a voice of bewildered pas-

sion, and stamping with rage, "is that the place for my cap-box! You do it on purpose, that you do!"

"John," mimicked Lord Cadureis, "how dare you do it on purpose!"

"Take that, you brat," shrieked the mother, and she struck her own hand against the doorway. "Oh! I'll give it you, I'll give it you," she bellowed under the united influence of rage and pain, and she pursued her agile child, who dodged her on the other side of the post-chaise, which he persisted in calling the family carriage.

"Oh! ma'am, my lady," exclaimed the waiting-woman, sallying forth from the abbey, "what is to be done with the parrot when we are away? Mrs. Brown says she won't see to it, that she won't; 'taynt her place."

This rebellion of Mrs. Brown was a diversion in favour of Plantagenet. Mrs. Cadureis waddled down the cloisters with precipitation, rushed into the kitchen, seized the surprised Mrs. Brown by the shoulder, and gave her a good shake; and darting at the cage, which held the parrot, she bore it in triumph to the carriage. "I will take the bird with me," said Mrs. Cadureis.

"We cannot take the bird inside, madam," said Plantagenet, "for it will overhear all our conversation, and repeat it. We shall not be able to abuse our friends."

Mrs. Cadureis threw the cage at her son's head, who, for the sake of the bird, dexterously caught it, but declared at the same time he would immediately throw it into the lake. Then Mrs. Cadureis began to cry with rage, and, seating herself on the open steps of the chaise, sobbed hysterically. Plantagenet stole round on tip-toe, and peeped in her face;—"A merry Christmas and a happy new year, Mrs. Cadureis," said her son.

"How can I be merry and happy, treated as I am?" sobbed the mother. "You do not treat Lady Annabel so. Oh! no, it is only your mother whom you use in this manner! Go to Cherbury. Go by all means, but go by yourself; I shall not go: go to your friends, Lord Cadureis; they are your friends, not mine, and I hope they are satisfied, now that they have robbed me of the affections of my child. I have seen what they have been after all this time. I am not so blind as some people think. No! I see how it is. I am nobody. Your poor mother, who brought you up, and educated you, is nobody. This is the end of all your Latin and French, and your fine lessons. Honour your father and your mother, Lord Cadureis; that's a finer lesson than all. Oh! oh! oh!"

This allusion to the Herberts suddenly calmed Plantagenet. He felt in an instant the injudiciousness of fostering by his conduct the latent jealousy which always lurked at the bottom of his mother's

heart, and which nothing but the united talent and goodness of Lady Annabel could have hitherto baffled. So he rejoined in a kind yet playful tone, "If you will be good, I will give you a kiss for a Christmas-box, mother, and the parrot shall go inside if you like."

"The parrot may stay at home, I do not care about it: but I cannot bear quarrelling; it is not my temper, you naughty, very naughty boy."

"My dear mother," continued his lordship, in a soothing tone, "these scenes always happen when people are going to travel. I assure you it is quite a part of packing up."

"You will be the death of me, that you will," said the mother, "with all your violence. You are worse than your father, that you are."

"Come, mother," said her son, drawing nearer, and just touching her shoulder with his hand, "will you not have my Christmas-box?"

The mother extended her cheek, which the son slightly touched with his lip, and then Mrs. Cadurcis jumped up as lively as ever, called for a glass of Mountain, and began rating the foot-boy.

At length the post-chaise was packed; they had a long journey before them, because Cadurcis would go round by Southport, to call upon a tradesman whom a month before he had commissioned to get a trinket made for him in London, according to the newest fashion, as a present for Venetia. The commission was executed; Mrs. Cadurcis, who had been consulted in confidence by her son on the subject, was charmed with the result of their united taste. She had very good-naturedly contributed one of her own few, but very fine, emeralds to the gift; upon the back of the brooch was engraved:—

TO VENETIA, FROM HER AFFECTIONATE BROTHER, PLANTAGENET.

"I hope she will be a sister, and more than a sister, to you," said Mrs. Cadurcis.

"Why?" inquired her son, rather confused.

"You may look farther, and fare worse," said Mrs. Cadurcis.

Plantagenet blushed; and yet he wondered why he blushed: he understood his mother, but he could not pursue the conversation; his heart fluttered.

A most cordial greeting awaited them at Cherbury; Dr. Masham was there, and was to remain until Monday. Mrs. Cadurcis would have opened about the present immediately, but her son warned her on the threshold that if she said a word about it, or seemed to be aware of its previous existence, even when it was shown, he would fling it instantly away into the snow; and her horror of this catastrophe bridled her tongue. Mrs. Cadurcis, however, was happy, and Lady Annabel was glad to see her so; the

Doctor, too, paid her some most charming compliments ; the good lady was in the highest spirits, for she was always in extremes, and at this moment she would willingly have laid down her life if she had thought the sacrifice could have contributed to the welfare of the Herberts.

Cadurcis himself drew Venetia aside, and then, holding the brooch reversed, he said, with rather a confused air, " Read that, Venetia."

" Oh ! Plantagenet !" she said, very much astonished.

" You see, Venetia," he added, leaving it in her hand, " it is yours."

Venetia turned the jewel ; her eye was dazzled with its brilliancy.

" It is too grand for a little girl, Plantagenet," she exclaimed, a little pale.

" No, it is not," said Plantagenet, firmly ; " besides, you will not always be a little girl ; and then, if ever we do not live together as we do now, you will always remember you have a brother."

" I must show it mamma ; I must ask her permission to take it, Plantagenet."

Venetia went up to her mother, who was talking to Mrs. Cadurcis. She had not courage to speak before that lady and Dr. Masham, so she called her mother aside.

" Mamma," she said, " something has happened."

" What, my dear ?" said Lady Annabel, somewhat surprised at the seriousness of her tone.

" Look at this, mamma !" said Venetia, giving her the brooch.

Lady Annabel looked at the jewel, and read the inscription. It was a more precious offering than the mother would willingly have sanctioned, but she was too highly bred, and too thoughtful of the feelings of others, to hesitate for a moment to admire it herself, and authorise its acceptance by her daughter. So she walked up to Cadurcis and gave him a mother's embrace for his magnificent present to his sister, placed the brooch itself near Venetia's heart, and then led her daughter to Mrs. Cadurcis, that the gratified mother might admire the testimony of her son's taste and affection. It was a most successful present, and Cadurcis felt grateful to his mother for her share in its production, and the very proper manner in which she received the announcement of its offering.

CHAPTER X.

THIS was Christmas-eve ; the snow was falling briskly. After dinner they were glad to cluster round the large fire in the green drawing-room. Dr. Masham had promised to read the evening

service in the chapel, which was now lit up, and the bell was sounding, that the cottagers might have the opportunity of attending.

Plantagenet and Venetia followed the elders to the chapel; they walked hand-in-hand down the long galleries.

"I should like to go all over this house," said Plantagenet to his companion. "Have you ever been?"

"Never," said Venetia; "half of it is shut up. Nobody ever goes into it, except mamma."

In the night there was a violent snow-storm; not only was the fall extremely heavy, but the wind was so high, that it carried the snow off the hills, and all the roads were blocked up, in many places ten or twelve feet deep. All communication was stopped. This was an adventure that amused the children, though the rest looked rather grave. Plantagenet expressed to Venetia his wish that the snow would never melt, and that they might remain at Cherbury for ever.

The children were to have a holyday this week, and they had planned some excursions in the park and neighbourhood, but now they were all prisoners to the house. They wandered about, turning the staircase into mountains, the great hall into an ocean, and the different rooms into so many various regions. They amused themselves with their adventures, and went on endless voyages of discovery. Every moment Plantagenet longed still more for the opportunity of exploring the uninhabited chambers; but Venetia shook her head, because she was sure Lady Annabel would not grant them permission.

"Did you ever live at any place before you came to Cherbury?" inquired Lord Cadurcis of Venetia.

"I know I was not born here," said Venetia; "but I was so young that I have no recollection of any other place."

"And did any one live here before you came?" said Plantagenet.

"I do not know," said Venetia, "I never heard if anybody did. I—I," she continued, a little constrained, "I know nothing."

"Do you remember your papa?" said Plantagenet.

"No," said Venetia.

"Then he must have died almost as soon as you were born," said Lord Cadurcis.

"I suppose he must," said Venetia, and her heart trembled.

"I wonder if he ever lived here!" said Plantagenet.

"Mamma does not like me to ask questions about my papa," said Venetia, "and I cannot tell you anything."

"Ah! your papa was different from mine, Venetia," said Cadurcis; "my mother talks of him often enough. They did not agree very well; and, when we quarrel, she always says I remind her of him. I dare say Lady Annabel loved your papa very much."

"I am sure mamma did," replied Venetia.

The children returned to the drawing-room, and joined their friends: Mrs. Cadurcis was sitting on the sofa, occasionally dozing over a sermon; Dr. Masham was standing with Lady Annabel in the recess of a distant window. Her ladyship's countenance was averted; she was reading a newspaper, which the Doctor had given her. As the door opened, Lady Annabel glanced round; her countenance was agitated; she folded up the newspaper rather hastily, and gave it to the Doctor.

"And what have you been doing, little folks?" inquired the Doctor of the new comers.

"We have been playing at the History of Rome," said Venetia, "and now that we have conquered every place, we do not know what to do."

"The usual result of conquest," said the Doctor, smiling. "This snow-storm is a great trial for you; I begin to believe that, after all, you would be more pleased to take your holydays at another opportunity."

"We could amuse ourselves very well," said Plantagenet, "if Lady Annabel would be so kind as to permit us to explore the part of the house that is shut up."

"That would be a strange mode of diversion," said Lady Annabel, very quietly, "and I do not think by any means a suitable one. There cannot be much amusement in roaming over a number of dusty unfurnished rooms."

"And so nicely dressed as you are too!" said Mrs. Cadurcis, rousing herself: "I wonder how such an idea could enter your head!"

"It snows harder than ever," said Venetia; "I think, after all, I shall learn my French vocabulary."

"If it snows to-morrow," said Plantagenet, "we will do our lessons as usual. Holydays, I find, are not so amusing as I supposed."

The snow did continue, and the next day the children voluntarily suggested that they should resume their usual course of life. With their mornings occupied, they found their sources of relaxation ample; and in the evening they acted plays, and Lady Annabel dressed them up in her shawls, and Dr. Masham read Shakspeare to them.

It was about the fourth day of the visit that Plantagenet, loitering in the hall with Venetia, said to her, "I saw your mamma go into the locked-up rooms last night. I do so wish that she would let us go there."

"Last night!" said Venetia; "when could you have seen her last night?"

"Very late : the fact is, I could not sleep, and I took it into my head to walk up and down the gallery. I often do so at the abbey. I like to walk up and down an old gallery alone at night. I do not know why ; but I like it very much. Everything is so still, and then you hear the owls. I cannot make out why it is ; but nothing gives me more pleasure than to get up when everybody is asleep. It seems as if one were the only living person in the world. I sometimes think, when I am a man I will always get up in the night, and go to bed in the day-time. Is not that odd ?"

"But mamma!" said Venetia, "how came you to see mamma?"

"Oh ! I am certain of it," said the boy ; "for, to tell you the truth, I was rather frightened at first ; only I thought it would not do for a Cadurcis to be afraid, so I stood against the wall, in the shade, and I was determined, whatever happened, not to cry out."

"Oh ! you frighten me so, Plantagenet !" said Venetia.

"Ah ! you might well have been frightened if you had been there ; past midnight, a tall white figure, and a light !—However, there is nothing to be alarmed about ; it was Lady Annabel, nobody else. I saw her as clearly as I see you now. She walked along the gallery, and went to the very door you showed me the other morning. I marked the door ; I could not mistake it. She unlocked it, and she went in."

"And then ?" inquired Venetia, eagerly.

"Why, then, like a fool, I went back to bed," said Plantagenet. "I thought it would seem so silly if I were caught, and I might not have had the good fortune to escape twice. I know no more."

Venetia could not reply. She heard a laugh, and then her mother's voice. They were called with a gay summons to see a colossal snow-ball, that some of the younger servants had made and rolled to the window of the terrace-room. It was ornamented with a crown of holly and mistletoe, and the parti-coloured berries looked bright in a straggling sunbeam which had fought its way through the still-loaded sky, and fell upon the terrace.

In the evening, as they sat round the fire, Mrs. Cadurcis began telling Venetia a long rambling ghost story, which she declared was a real ghost story, and had happened in her own family. Such communications were not very pleasing to Lady Annabel, but she was too well bred to interrupt her guest. When, however, the narrative was finished, and Venetia, by her observations, evidently indicated the effect that it had produced upon her mind, her mother took the occasion of impressing upon her the little credibility which should be attached to such legends, and the rational process by which many unquestionable apparitions might be accounted for. Dr. Masham, following this train, recounted a story of a ghost which

had been generally received in a neighbouring village for a considerable period, and attested by the most veracious witnesses, but which was explained afterwards by turning out to be an instance of somnambulism. Venetia appeared to be extremely interested in the subject; she inquired much about sleep-walkers and sleep-walking; and a great many examples of the habit were cited. At length she said, "Mamma, did you ever walk in your sleep?"

"Not to my knowledge," said Lady Annabel, smiling; "I should hope not."

"Well, do you know," said Plantagenet, who had hitherto listened in silence, "it is very curious, but I once dreamt that you did, Lady Annabel."

"Indeed!" said the lady.

"Yes! and I dreamt it last night, too," continued Cadurcis. "I thought I was sleeping in the uninhabited rooms here, and the door opened, and you walked in with a light."

"No! Plantagenet," said Venetia, who was seated by him, and who spoke in a whisper, "it was not——"

"Hush!" said Cadurcis, in a low voice.

"Well, that was a strange dream," said Mrs. Cadurcis; "was it not, Doctor?"

"Now, children, I will tell you a very curious story," said the Doctor; "and it is quite a true one, for it happened to myself."

The Doctor was soon embarked in his tale, and his audience speedily became interested in the narrative; but Lady Annabel for some time maintained complete silence.

CHAPTER XI.

THE spring returned; the intimate relations between the two families were each day more confirmed. Lady Annabel had presented her daughter and Plantagenet each with a beautiful pony, but their rides were at first to be confined to the park, and to be ever attended by a groom. In time, however, duly accompanied, they were permitted to extend their progress so far as Cadurcis. Mrs. Cadurcis had consented to the wishes of her son to restore the old garden, and Venetia was his principal adviser and assistant in the enterprise. Plantagenet was fond of the abbey, and nothing but the agreeable society of Cherbury on the one hand, and the relief of escaping from his mother on the other, could have induced him to pass so little of his time at home; but, with Venetia for his companion, his mornings at the abbey passed charmingly, and, as the days were now at their full length again, there was abundance of time, after their studies at Cherbury, to ride together through

the woods to Cadureis, spend several hours there, and for Venetia to return to the hall before sunset. Plantagenet always accompanied her to the limits of the Cherbury grounds, and then returned by himself, solitary and full of fancies.

Lady Annabel had promised the children that they should some day ride together to Marrinhurst, the rectory of Dr. Masham, to eat strawberries and cream. This was to be a great festival, and was looked forward to with corresponding interest. Her ladyship had kindly offered to accompany Mrs. Cadureis in the carriage, but that lady was an invalid and declined the journey ; so Lady Annabel, who was herself a good horsewoman, mounted her jennet with Venetia and Plantagenet.

Marrinhurst was only five miles from Cherbury by a cross-road, which was scarcely passable for carriages. The rectory house was a substantial, square-built, red brick mansion, shaded by gigantic elms, but the southern front covered with a famous vine, trained over it with elaborate care, and of which and his espaliers the Doctor was very proud. The garden was thickly stocked with choice fruit-trees ; there was not the slightest pretence to pleasure grounds ; but there was a capital bowling-green, and, above all, a grotto, where the Doctor smoked his evening pipe, and moralized in the midst of his cucumbers and cabbages. On each side extended the meadows of his glebe, where his kine ruminated at will. It was altogether a scene as devoid of the picturesque as any that could be well imagined ; flat, but not low, and rich, and green, and still.

His expected guests met as warm a reception as such a hearty friend might be expected to afford. Dr. Masham was scarcely less delighted at the excursion than the children themselves, and rejoiced in the sunny day that made everything more glad and bright. The garden, the grotto, the bowling-green, and all the novelty of the spot, greatly diverted his young companions ; they visited his farm-yard, were introduced to his poultry, rambled over his meadows, and admired his cows, which he had collected with equal care and knowledge. Nor was the interior of this bachelor's residence devoid of amusement. Every nook and corner was filled with objects of interest ; and everything was in admirable order. The goddess of neatness and precision reigned supreme, especially in his hall, which, though barely ten feet square, was a cabinet of rural curiosities. His guns, his fishing-tackle, a cabinet of birds stuffed by himself, a fox in a glass-case that seemed absolutely running, and an otter with a real fish in its mouth, in turn delighted them ; but chiefly, perhaps, his chimney-corner of Dutch tiles, all Scriptural subjects, which Venetia and Plantagenet emulated each other in discovering.

Then his library, which was rare and splendid, for the Doctor was one of the most renowned scholars in the kingdom, and his pictures, his prints, and his gold fish, and his canary birds; it seemed they never could exhaust such sources of endless amusement; to say nothing of every other room in the house, for, from the garret to the dairy, his guests encouraged him in introducing them to every thing, every person, and every place.

"And this is the way we old bachelors contrive to pass our lives," said the good Doctor; "and now, my dear lady, Goody Blount will give us some dinner."

The Doctor's repast was a very substantial one; he seemed resolved, at one ample swoop, to repay Lady Annabel for all her hospitality; and he really took such delight in their participation of it, that his principal guest was constrained to check herself in more than one warning intimation that moderation was desirable, were it only for the sake of the strawberries and cream. All this time his housekeeper, Goody Blount, as he called her, in her lace cap and ruffles, as precise and starch as an old picture, stood behind his chair with pleased solemnity, directing, with unruffled composure, the movements of the liveried bumpkin who this day was promoted to the honour of "waiting at table."

"Come," said the Doctor, as the cloth was cleared, "I must bargain for one toast, Lady Annabel: 'Church and State.'"

"What is Church and State?" said Venetia.

"As good things, Miss Venetia, as strawberries and cream," said the Doctor, laughing; "and, like them, always best united."

After their repast, the children went into the garden to amuse themselves. They strolled about some time, until Plantagenet at length took it into his head that he should like to learn to play at bowls; and he said, if Venetia would wait in the grotto, where they then were talking, he would run back and ask the Doctor if the servant might teach him. He was not long absent; but appeared, on his return, a little agitated. Venetia inquired if he had been successful, but he shook his head, and said he had not asked.

"Why did you not?" said Venetia.

"I did not like," he replied, looking very serious; "something happened."

"What could have happened?" said Venetia.

"Something strange," was his answer.

"Oh, do tell me, Plantagenet!"

"Why," said he, in a low voice, "your mamma is crying."

"Crying!" exclaimed Venetia; "my dear mamma crying! I must go to her directly."

"Hush!" said Plantagenet, shaking his head, "you must not go."

"I must."

"No, you must not go, Venetia," was his reply; "I am sure she does not want us to know she is crying."

"What did she say to you?"

"She did not see me; the Doctor did, and he gave me a nod to go away."

"I never saw mamma cry," said Venetia.

"Don't you say anything about it, Venetia," said Plantagenet, with a very manly air; "listen to what I say."

"I do, Plantagenet, always; but still I should like to know what mamma can be crying about. Do tell me all about it."

"Why, I came to the room by the open windows, and your mamma was standing up, with her back to me, and leaning on the mantelpiece, with her face in her handkerchief; and the Doctor was standing up too, only his back was to the fireplace; and when he saw me, he made me a sign to go away, and I went directly."

"Are you sure mamma was crying?"

"I heard her sob."

"I think I shall cry," said Venetia.

"You must not; you must know nothing about it. If you let your mamma know that I saw her crying, I shall never tell you anything again."

"What do you think she was crying about, Plantagenet?"

"I cannot say; perhaps she had been taking about your papa. I do not want to play at bowls now," added Plantagenet; "let us go and see the cows."

In the course of half an hour the servant summoned the children to the house. The horses were ready, and they were now to return. Lady Annabel received them with her usual cheerfulness.

"Well, dear children," said she, "have you been very much amused?"

Venetia ran forward, and embraced her mother with even unusual fondness. She was mindful of Plantagenet's injunctions, and was resolved not to revive her mother's grief by any allusion that could recall the past; but her heart was, nevertheless, full of sympathy, and she could not have rode home, had she not thus expressed her love for her mother.

With the exception of this strange incident, over which, afterwards Venetia often pondered, and which made her rather serious the whole of the ride home, this expedition to Marringhurst was very happy day.

CHAPTER XII.

THIS happy summer was succeeded by a singularly wet autumn. Weeks of continuous rain rendered it difficult even for the little Cadurcis, who defied the elements, to be so constant as heretofore in his daily visits to Cherbury. His mother, too, grew daily a greater invalid, and, with increasing sufferings and infirmities, the natural captiousness of her temper proportionably exhibited itself. She insisted upon the companionship of her son, and that he should not leave the house in such unseasonable weather. If he resisted, she fell into one of her jealous rages, and taunted him with loving strangers better than his own mother. Cadurcis, on the whole, behaved very well; he thought of Lady Annabel's injunctions, and restrained his passion. Yet he was not repaid for the sacrifice; his mother made no effort to render their joint society agreeable, or even endurable. She was rarely in an amiable mood, and generally either irritable or sullen. If the weather held up a little, and he ventured to pay a visit to Cherbury, he was sure to be welcomed back with a fit of passion; either Mrs. Cadurcis was angered for being left alone, or had fermented herself into fury by the certainty of his catching a fever. If Plantagenet remained at the abbey, she was generally sullen; and, as he himself was naturally silent under any circumstances, his mother would indulge in that charming monologue, so conducive to domestic serenity, termed "talking at a person," and was continually insinuating that she supposed he found it very dull to pass his day with her, and that she dared say that somebody could be lively enough if he were somewhere else.

Cadurcis would turn pale, and bite his lip, and then leave the room; and whole days would sometimes pass with barely a monosyllable being exchanged between this parent and child. Cadurcis had found some opportunities of pouring forth his griefs and mortification into the ear of Venetia, and they had reached her mother; but Lady Annabel, though she sympathised with this interesting boy, invariably counselled duty. The morning studies were abandoned, but a quantity of books were sent over from Cherbury for Plantagenet, and Lady Annabel seized every opportunity of conciliating Mrs. Cadurcis' temper in favour of her child, by the attention which she paid the mother. The weather, however, prevented either herself or Venetia from visiting the abbey; and, on the whole, the communications between the two establishments and their inmates had become rare.

Though now a continual inmate of the abbey, Cadurcis was

seldom the companion of his mother. They met at their meals, and that was all. He entered the room every day with an intention of conciliating; but the mutual tempers of the mother and the son were so quick and sensitive, that he always failed in his purpose, and could only avoid a storm by dogged silence. This enraged Mrs. Cadurcis more even than his impertinence; she had no conduct; she lost all command over herself, and did not hesitate to address to her child terms of reproach and abuse, which a vulgar mind could only conceive and a coarse tongue alone express. What a contrast to Cherbury, to the mild maternal elegance and provident kindness of Lady Annabel, and the sweet tones of Venetia's ever-sympathising voice! Cadurcis, though so very young, was gifted with an innate fastidiousness, that made him shrink from a rude woman. His feelings were different in regard to men; he sympathised at a very early age with the bold and the energetic; his favourites among the peasantry were ever those who excelled in athletic sports; and, though he never expressed the opinion, he did not look upon the poacher with the evil eye of his class. But a coarse and violent woman jarred even his young nerves; and this woman was his mother, his only parent, almost his only relation; for he had no near relative, except a cousin whom he had never even seen, the pennyless orphan of a pennyless brother of his father, and who had been sent to sea at a very early age; so that, after all, his mother was the only natural friend he had. This poor little boy would fly from that mother with a sullen brow, or, perhaps, even with a harsh and cutting repartee; and then he would lock himself up in his room and weep. But he allowed no witnesses of this weakness. The lad was very proud. If any of the household passed by as he quitted the saloon, and stared for a moment at his pale and agitated face, he would coin a smile for the instant, and say even a kind word, for he was very courteous to his inferiors, and all the servants loved him; and then take refuge in his solitary woe.

Relieved by this indulgence of his mortified heart, Cadurcis looked about him for resources. The rain was pouring in torrents, and the splash of the troubled and swollen lake might be heard even at the abbey. At night the rising gusts of wind, for the nights were always clear and stormy, echoed down the cloisters with a wild moan to which he loved to listen. In the morning he beheld with interest the savage spoils of the tempest; mighty branches of trees strewn about, and sometimes a vast trunk uprooted from its ancient settlement. Irresistibly the conviction impressed itself upon his mind, that, if he were alone in this old abbey, with no mother to break that strange fountain of fancies that seemed always to bubble up in his solitude, he might be happy. He wanted no companions; he loved to be alone, to listen to the winds, and gaze upon the trees

and waters, and wander in those dim cloisters and that gloomy gallery.

From the first hour of his arrival he had loved the venerable hall of his fathers. Its appearance harmonised with all the associations of his race. Power and pomp, ancestral fame, the legendary respect of ages, all that was great, exciting, and heroic, all that was marked out from the common-place current of human events, hovered round him. In the halls of Cadurcis he was the Cadurcis; though a child, he was keenly sensible of his high race: his whole being sympathised with their glory; he was capable of dying sooner than of disgracing them; and then came the memory of his mother's sharp voice and harsh vulgar words, and he shivered with disgust.

Forced into solitude, forced to feed upon his own mind, Cadurcis found in that solitude each day a dearer charm, and in that mind a richer treasure of interest and curiosity. He loved to wander about, dream of the past, and conjure up a future as glorious. What was he to be?—What should be his career?—Whither should he wend his course? Even at this early age, dreams of far lands flitted over his mind, and schemes of fantastic and adventurous life. But now he was a boy—a wretched boy—controlled by a vulgar and narrow-minded woman! And this servitude must last for years; yes! years must elapse before he was his own master. Oh! if he could only pass them alone, without a human voice to disturb his musings, a single form to distract his vision!

Under the influence of such feelings, even Cherbury figured to his fancy in somewhat faded colours. There, indeed, he was loved and cherished; there, indeed, no sound was ever heard, no sight ever seen, that could annoy or mortify the high pitch of his unconscious ideal; but still, even at Cherbury, he was a child. Under the influence of daily intercourse, his tender heart had balanced, perhaps even outweighed, his fiery imagination. That constant yet delicate affection had softened all his soul: he had no time but to be grateful and to love. He returned home only to muse over their sweet society, and contrast their refined and gentle life with the harsh rude hearth that awaited him. Whatever might be his reception at home, he was thrown back for solace on their memory, not upon his own heart; and he felt the delightful conviction that to-morrow would renew the spell whose enchantment had enabled him to endure the present vexation. But now the magic of that intercourse had ceased; after a few days of restlessness and repining, he discovered that he must find in his desolation sterner sources of support than the memory of Venetia, and the recollections of the domestic joys of Cherbury. It was astonishing with what rapidity the character of Cadurcis developed itself in solitude;

and strange was the contrast between the gentle child who, a few weeks before, had looked forward with so much interest to accompanying Venetia to a childish festival, and the stern and moody being who paced the solitary cloisters of Cadurcis, and then would withdraw to his lonely chamber and the amusement of a book. He was at this time deeply interested in Purchas's Pilgrimage, one of the few books of which the late lord had not despoiled him. Narratives of travels and voyages always particularly pleased him; he had an idea that he was laying up information which might be useful to him hereafter; the Cherbury collection was rich in this class of volumes, and Lady Annabel encouraged their perusal.

In this way many weeks elapsed at the abbey, during which the visits of Plantagenet to Cherbury were very few. Sometimes, if the weather cleared for an hour during the morning, he would mount his pony, and gallop, without stopping, to the hall. The rapidity of the motion excited his mind; he fancied himself, as he embraced Venetia, some chieftain who had escaped for a moment from his castle to visit his mistress; his imagination conjured up a war between the opposing towers of Cadurcis and Cherbury; and when his mother fell into a passion on his return, it passed with him only, according to its length and spirit, as a brisk skirmish or a general engagement.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONE afternoon, on his return from Cherbury, Plantagenet found the fire extinguished in the little room which he had appropriated to himself, and where he kept his books. As he had expressed his wish to the servant that the fire should be kept up, he complained to him of the neglect, but was informed, in reply, that the fire had been allowed to go out by his mother's orders, and that she desired in future that he would always read in the saloon. Plantagenet had sufficient self-control to make no observation before the servant, and soon after joined his mother, who looked very sullen, as if she were conscious that she had laid a train for an explosion.

Dinner was now served, a short and silent meal. Lord Cadurcis did not choose to speak because he felt aggrieved, and his mother because she was husbanding her energies for the contest which she believed impending. At length, when the table was cleared, and the servant departed, Cadurcis said, in a very quiet tone, "I think I shall write to my guardian to-morrow about my going to Eton."

"You shall do no such thing," said Mrs. Cadurcis, bristling up; "I never heard such a ridiculous idea in my life as a boy like you writing letters on such subjects to a person you have never yet

seen. When I think it proper that you should go to Eton, I shall write."

"I wish you would think it proper now then, ma'am."

"I won't be dictated to," said Mrs. Cadurcis, fiercely.

"I was not dictating," replied her son, calmly.

"You would if you could," said his mother.

"Time enough to find fault with me when I do, ma'am."

"There is enough to find fault about at all times, sir."

"On which side, Mrs. Cadurcis?" inquired Plantagenet, with a sneer.

"Don't aggravate me, Lord Cadurcis," said his mother.

"How am I aggravating you, ma'am?"

"I won't be answered," said the mother.

"I prefer silence myself," said the son.

"I won't be insulted in my own room, sir," said Mrs. Cadurcis.

"I am not insulting you, Mrs. Cadurcis," said Plantagenet, rather fiercely; "and as for your own room, I never wish to enter it. Indeed I should not be here at this moment, had you not ordered my fire to be put out, and particularly requested that I should sit in the saloon."

"Oh! you are a vastly obedient person, I dare say," replied Mrs. Cadurcis, very pettishly. "How long, I should like to know, have my requests received such particular attention? Pooh!"

"Well, then, I will order my fire to be lighted again," said Plantagenet.

"You shall do no such thing," said the mother; "I am mistress in this house. No one shall give orders here but me, and you may write to your guardian and tell him that, if you like."

"I shall certainly not write to my guardian, for the first time," said Lord Cadurcis, "about any such nonsense."

"Nonsense, sir! Nonsense you said, did you? Your mother nonsense! This is the way to treat a parent, is it? I am nonsense, am I? I will teach you what nonsense is. Nonsense shall be very good sense; you shall find that, sir, that you shall. Nonsense, indeed! I'll write to your guardian, that I will! You call your mother nonsense, do you? And where did you learn that, I should like to know? Nonsense, indeed! This comes of your going to Cherbury! So your mother is nonsense; a pretty lesson for Lady Annabel to teach you. Oh! I'll speak my mind to her, that I will."

"What has Lady Annabel to do with it?" inquired Cadurcis in a loud tone.

"Don't threaten me, sir," said Mrs. Cadurcis, with violent gesture, "I won't be menaced; I won't be menaced by my son. Pretty

goings on, indeed! But I will put a stop to them; will I not? that is all. Nonsense, indeed; your mother nonsense!"

"Well, you do talk nonsense, and the greatest," said Plantagenet, doggedly; "you are talking nonsense now, you are always talking nonsense, and you never open your mouth about Lady Annabel without talking nonsense."

"If I was not very ill I would give it you," said his mother, grinding her teeth. "O you brat! You wicked brat you! Is this the way to address me? I have half a mind to shake your viciousness out of you, that I have! You are worse than your father, that you are!"—and here she wept with rage.

"I dare say my father was not so bad, after all!" said Cadurcis.

"What should you know about your father, sir?" said Mrs. Cadurcis. "How dare you speak about your father!"

"Who should speak about a father but a son?"

"Hold your impudence, sir!"

"I am not impudent, ma'am."

"You aggravating brat!" exclaimed the enraged woman, "I wish I had something to throw at you!"

"Did you throw things at my father?" asked his lordship.

Mrs. Cadurcis went into an hysterical rage; then, suddenly jumping up, she rushed at her son. Lord Cadurcis took up a position behind the table, but the sportive and mocking air which he generally instinctively assumed on these occasions, and which, while it irritated his mother more, was in reality affected by the boy from a sort of nervous desire of preventing these dreadful exposures from assuming a too tragic tone, did not characterise his countenance on the present occasion; on the contrary, it was pale, but composed and very serious. Mrs. Cadurcis, after one or two ineffectual attempts to catch him, paused and panted for breath. He took advantage of this momentary cessation, and spoke thus—"Mother, I am in no humour for frolics. I moved out of your way that you might not strike me, because I have made up my mind that, if you ever strike me again, I will live with you no longer. Now I have given you warning; do what you please; I shall sit down in this chair, and not move. If you strike me, you know the consequences." So saying, his lordship resumed his chair.

Mrs. Cadurcis simultaneously sprang forward and boxed his ears; and then her son rose without the slightest expression of any kind, and slowly quitted the chamber.

Mrs. Cadurcis remained alone in a savage sulk: hours passed away, and her son never made his appearance. Then she rang the bell, and ordered the servant to tell Lord Cadurcis that tea was ready; but the servant returned, and reported that his lordship had locked himself up in his room, and would not reply to his inquiries.

Determined not to give in, Mrs. Cadurcis, at length, retired for the night, rather regretting her violence, but still sullen. Having well scolded her waiting-woman, she at length fell asleep.

The morning brought breakfast, but no Lord Cadurcis ; in vain were all the messages of his mother, her son would make no reply to them. Mrs. Cadurcis, at length, personally repaired to his room and knocked at the door, but she was as unsuccessful as the servants ; she began to think he would starve, and desired the servant to offer from himself to bring his meal. Still silence. Indignant at his treatment of these overtures of conciliation, Mrs. Cadurcis returned to the saloon, confident that hunger, if no other impulse, would bring her wild cub out of his lair ; but, just before dinner, her waiting-woman came running into the room.

"Oh, ma'am, ma'am, I don't know where Lord Cadurcis has gone ; but I have just seen John, and he says there was no pony in the stable this morning."

Mrs. Cadurcis sprang up, rushed to her son's chamber, found the door still locked, ordered it to be burst open, and then it turned out that his lordship had never been there at all, for the bed was unused. Mrs. Cadurcis was frightened out of her life ; the servants, to console her, assured her that Plantagenet must be at Cherbury ; and while she believed their representations, which were probable, she became not only more composed, but resumed her jealousy and sullenness. Gone to Cherbury, indeed ! No doubt of it ! Let him remain at Cherbury. Execrating Lady Annabel, she flung herself into an easy chair, and dined alone, preparing herself to speak her mind on her son's return.

The night, however, did not bring him, and Mrs. Cadurcis began to recur to her alarm. Much as she now disliked Lady Annabel, she could not resist the conviction that her ladyship would not permit Plantagenet to remain at Cherbury. Nevertheless, jealous, passionate, and obstinate, she stifled her fears, vented her spleen on her unhappy domestics, and, finally, exhausting herself by a storm of passion about some very unimportant subject, again sought refuge in sleep.

She awoke early in a fright, and inquired immediately for her son. He had not been seen. She ordered the abbey bell to be sounded, sent messengers throughout the demesne, and directed all the offices to be searched. At first she thought he must have returned, and slept, perhaps, in a barn ; then she adopted the more probable conclusion, that he had drowned himself in the lake. Then she went into hysterics ; called Plantagenet her lost darling ; declared he was the best and most dutiful of sons, and the image of his poor father,—then abused all the servants, and then abused herself.

About noon she grew quite distracted, and rushed about the house with her hair dishevelled, and in a dressing-gown—looked in all the closets, behind the screens, under the chairs, into her work-box—but, strange to say, with no success. Then she went off into a swoon, and her servants, alike frightened about master and mistress, mother and son, dispatched a messenger immediately to Cherbury for intelligence, advice, and assistance. In less than an hour's time the messenger returned, and informed them that Lord Cadureis had not been at Cherbury since two days back, but that Lady Annabel was very sorry to hear that their mistress was so ill, and would come on to see her immediately. In the meantime, Lady Annabel added that she had sent to Dr. Masham, and had great hopes that Lord Cadureis was at Marrington. Mrs. Cadureis, who had now come to, as her waiting-woman described the returning consciousness of her mistress, eagerly embraced the hope held out of Plantagenet being at Marrington, poured forth a thousand expressions of gratitude, admiration, and affection for Lady Annabel, who, she declared, was her best, her only friend, and the being in the world whom she loved most, next to her unhappy and injured child.

After another hour of suspense Lady Annabel arrived, and her entrance was the signal for a renewed burst of hysterics from Mrs. Cadureis, so wild and terrible that they must have been contagious to any female of less disciplined emotions than her guest.

CHAPTER XIV.

TOWARDS the evening Dr. Masham arrived at Cadureis. He could give no intelligence of Plantagenet, who had not called at Marrington; but he offered, and was prepared, to undertake his pursuit. The good Doctor had his saddle-bags well stocked, and was now on his way to Southport, that being the nearest town, and where he doubted not to gain some tidings of the fugitive. Mrs. Cadureis he found so indisposed, that he anticipated the charitable intentions of Lady Annabel not to quit her; and after having bid them place their confidence in Providence and his humble exertions, he at once departed on his researches.

In the meantime, let us return to the little lord himself. Having secured the advantage of a long start, by the device of turning the key of his chamber, he repaired to the stables, and finding no one to observe him, saddled his pony and galloped away without plan or purpose. An instinctive love of novelty and adventure induced him to direct his course by a road which he had never before pursued; and, after two or three miles' progress

through a wild open country of brushwood, he found that he had entered that considerable forest which formed the boundary of many of the views from Cadureis. The afternoon was clear and still, the sun shining in the light blue sky, and the wind altogether hushed. On each side of the winding road spread the bright green turf, occasionally shaded by picturesque groups of doddered oaks. The calm beauty of the sylvan scene wonderfully touched the fancy of the youthful fugitive; it soothed and gratified him. He pulled up his pony; patted its lively neck, as if in gratitude for its good service, and, confident that he could not be successfully pursued, indulged in a thousand dreams of Robin Hood and his merry men. As for his own position and prospects, he gave himself no anxiety about them; satisfied with his escape from a revolting thralldom, his mind seemed to take a bound from the difficulty of his situation and the wildness of the scene, and he felt himself *a man, and one, too*, whom nothing could daunt or appal.

Soon the road itself quite disappeared and vanished in a complete turfy track; but the continuing marks of cart-wheels assured him that it was a thoroughfare, although he was now indeed journeying in the heart of a forest of oaks, and he doubted not it would lead to some town or village, or at any rate to some farmhouse. Towards sunset, he determined to make use of the remaining light, and pushed on apace; but it soon grew so dark, that he found it necessary to resume his walking pace, from fear of the overhanging branches and the trunks of felled trees which occasionally crossed his way.

Notwithstanding the very probable prospect of passing his night in the forest, our little adventurer did not lose heart. Cadureis was a very intrepid child, and when in the company of those with whom he was not familiar, and free from those puerile associations to which those who had known and lived with him long were necessarily subject, he would assume a staid and firm demeanour very unusual with one of such tender years. A light in the distance was now not only a signal that the shelter he desired was at hand, but reminded him that it was necessary, by his assured port, to prove that he was not unused to travel alone, and that he was perfectly competent and qualified to be his own master.

As he drew nearer, the lights multiplied, and the moon, which now rose over the forest, showed to him that the trees, retiring on both sides to some little distance, left a circular plot of ground, on which were not only the lights which had at first attracted his attention, but the red flames of a watch-fire, round which some dark figures had hitherto been clustered. The sound of horses' feet had disturbed them, and the fire was now more and more visible. As Cadureis approached, he observed some low tents, and

in a few minutes he was in the centre of an encampment of gipsies. He was for a moment somewhat dismayed, for he had been brought up with the usual terror of these wild people; nevertheless, he was not unequal to the occasion. He was surrounded in an instant, but only with women and children; for the gipsy-men never immediately appear. They smiled with their bright eyes, and the flames of the watch-fire threw a lurid glow over their dark and flashing countenances; they held out their practised hands; they uttered unintelligible, but not unfriendly sounds. The heart of Cadurcis faltered, but his voice did not betray him.

"I am cold, good people," said the undaunted boy; "will you let me warm myself by your fire?"

A beautiful girl, with significant gestures, pressed her hand to her heart, then pointed in the direction of the tents, and then rushed away, soon reappearing with a short thin man, inclining to middle age, but of a compact and apparently powerful frame, lithe, supple, and sinewy. His complexion was dark, but clear; his eye large, liquid, and black; but his other features small, though precisely moulded. He wore a green jacket and a pair of black velvet breeches, his legs and feet being bare, with the exception of slippers. Round his head was twisted a red handkerchief, which, perhaps, might not have looked like a turban on a countenance less oriental.

"What would the young master?" inquired the gipsy-man, in a voice far from disagreeable, and with a gesture of courtesy; but, at the same time, he shot a scrutinising glance first at Plantagenet, and then at his pony.

"I would remain with you," said Cadurcis; "that is, if you will let me."

The gipsy-man made a sign to the women, and Plantagenet was lifted by them off his pony, before he could be aware of their purpose; the children led the pony away, and the gipsy-man conducted Plantagenet to the fire, where an old woman sat, presiding over the mysteries of an enormous flesh-pot. Immediately his fellows, who had originally been clustered around it, re-appeared; fresh blocks and branches were thrown on, the flames crackled and rose, the men seated themselves around, and Plantagenet, excited by the adventure, rubbed his hands before the fire, and determined to fear nothing.

A savoury steam exuded from the flesh-pot.

"That smells well," said Plantagenet.

"'Tis a dimber coqe,"* whispered one of the younger men to a companion.

* 'Tis a lively lad.

"Our supper has but rough seasoning for such as you," said the man who had first saluted him, and who was apparently the leader, "but the welcome is hearty."

The woman and girls now came with wooden bowls and platters, and, after serving the men, seated themselves in an exterior circle, the children playing round them.

"Come, old mort," said the leader, in a very different tone to the one in which he addressed his young guest, "tout the cobble-colter; are we to have darkmans upon us? And, Beruna, flick the panani."*

Upon this, that beautiful girl, who had at first attracted the notice of Cadureis, called out, in a sweet lively voice, "Ay! ay! Morgana!" and in a moment handed over the heads of the women a pannier of bread, which the leader took, and offered its contents to our fugitive. Cadureis helped himself, with a bold but gracious air. The pannier was then passed round, and the old woman, opening the pot, drew out, with a huge iron fork, a fine turkey, which she tossed into a large wooden platter, and cut up with great quickness. First she helped Morgana, but only gained a reproof for her pains, who immediately yielded his portion to Plantagenet. Each man was provided with his knife, but the guest had none. Morgana immediately gave up his own.

"Beruna!" he shouted, "gibel a chiv for the gentry cove."†

"Ay! ay! Morgana!" said the girl; and she brought the knife to Plantagenet himself, saying, at the same time, with sparkling eyes, "Yam, yam, gentry cove."‡

Cadureis really thought it was the most delightful meal he had ever made in his life. The flesh-pot held something besides turkeys. Rough as was the fare, it was good and plentiful. As for beverage, they drank humpty-dumpty, which is ale boiled with brandy, and which is not one of the slightest charms of a gipsy's life. When the men were satisfied, their platters were filled, and given to the women and children: and Beruna, with her portion, came and seated herself by Plantagenet, looking at him with a blended glance of delight and astonishment, like a beautiful young savage, and then turning to her female companions to stifle a laugh. The flesh-pot was carried away, the men lit their pipes, the fire was replenished, its red shadow mingled with the silver beams of the moon: around were the glittering tents and the silent woods,—on all sides flashing eyes and picturesque forms. Cadureis glanced at his companions, and gazed upon the scene with feelings of ravishing

* Come, old woman, look after the turkey. Are we to wait till night? And, Beruna, cut the bread.

† Bring a knife for the gentleman.

‡ Eat, eat, gentleman.

excitement; and then, almost unconscious of what he was saying, exclaimed—"At length I have found the life that suits me!"

"Indeed! Squire!" said Morgana. "Would you be one of us?"

"From this moment," said Cadurcis, "if you will admit me to your band. But what can I do? And I have nothing to give you. You must teach me to earn my right to our supper."

"We'll make a Turkey merchant* of you yet," said an old gipsy, "never fear that."

"Bah, Peter!" said Morgana, with an angry look, "your red rag will never lie still. And what was the purpose of your present travel?" he continued to Plantagenet.

"None; I was sick of silly home."

"The gentry cove will be romboyed by his dam," said a third gipsy; "Queer Cuffin will be the word yet, if we don't tout."†

"Well, you shall see a little more of us before you decide," said Morgana, thoughtfully, and turning the conversation. "Beruna."

"Ay! ay! Morgana!"

"Tip me the clank, like a dimker mort as you are; trim a ken for the gentry cove; he is no lauspresado, or I am a kinchin."‡

"Ay! ay! Morgana," gaily exclaimed the girl, and she ran off to prepare a bed for the Lord of Cadurcis.

CHAPTER XV.

DR. MASHAM could gain no tidings of the object of his pursuit at Southport: here, however, he ascertained that Plantagenet could not have fled to London, for in those days public conveyances were rare. There was only one coach that ran, or rather jogged, along this road, and it went but once a week, it being expected that very night; while the innkeeper was confident that so far as Southport was concerned, his little lordship had not sought refuge in the waggon, which was more frequent, though somewhat slower, in its progress to the metropolis. Unwilling to return home, although the evening was now drawing in, the Doctor resolved to proceed to a considerable town about twelve miles further, which Cadurcis might have reached by a cross road; so drawing his cloak around him, looking to his pistols, and desiring his servant to follow

* *i. e.* We will teach you to steal a turkey.

† His mother will make a hue and cry after the gentleman yet; justice of the peace will be the word, if we don't look sharp.

‡ Give me the tankard, like a pretty girl. Get a bed ready for the gentleman. He is no informer, or I am an infant.

his example, the stout-hearted Rector of Marringhurst pursued his way.

It was dark when the Doctor entered the town, and he proceeded immediately to the inn where the coach was expected, with some faint hope that the fugitive might be discovered abiding within its walls; but, to all his inquiries about young gentlemen and ponies, he received very unsatisfactory answers; so, reconciling himself as well as he could to the disagreeable posture of affairs, he settled himself in the parlour of the inn, with a good fire, and, lighting his pipe, desired his servant to keep a sharp look-out.

In due time a great uproar in the inn-yard announced the arrival of the stage,—an unwieldy machine, carrying six inside, and dragged by as many horses. The Doctor, opening the door of his apartment,—which led on to a gallery that ran round the inn-yard,—leaned over the balustrade with his pipe in his mouth, and watched proceedings. It so happened that the stage was to discharge one of its passengers at this town, who had come from the north, and the Doctor recognised in him a neighbour and brother magistrate, one Squire Mountmeadow, a very important personage in his way, the terror of poachers, and somewhat of an oracle on the bench, as it was said that he could even take a deposition without the assistance of his clerk. Although, in spite of the ostler's lanterns, it was very dark, it was impossible ever to be unaware of the arrival of Squire Mountmeadow; for he was one of those great men who take care to remind the world of their dignity by the attention which they require on every occasion.

“Coachman!” said the authoritative voice of the Squire. “Where is the coachman? Oh! you are there, Sir, are you? Postilion! Where is the postilion? Oh! you are there, Sir, are you? Host! Where is the host? Oh! you are there, Sir, are you? Waiter! Where is the waiter? I say where is the waiter?”

“Coming, please your worship!”

“How long am I to wait? Oh! you are there, Sir, are you? Coachman!”

“Your worship!”

“Postilion!”

“Yes, your worship!”

“Host!”

“Your worship's servant!”

“Waiter!”

“Your worship's honour's humble servant!”

“I am going to alight!”

All four attendants immediately bowed, and extended their arms to assist this very great man; but Squire Mountmeadow, scarcely

deigning to avail himself of their proffered assistance, and pausing on each step, looking around him with his long, lean, solemn visage, finally reached terra firma in safety, and slowly stretched his tall, ungainly figure. It was at this moment that Dr. Masham's servant approached him, and informed his worship that his master was at the inn, and would be happy to see him. The countenance of the great Mountmeadow relaxed at the mention of the name of a brother magistrate, and in an audible voice he bade the groom "tell my worthy friend, his worship, your worthy master, that I shall be rejoiced to pay my respects to an esteemed neighbour and a brother magistrate."

With slow and solemn steps, preceded by the host, and followed by the waiter, Squire Mountmeadow ascended the staircase of the external gallery, pausing occasionally, and looking around him with thoughtful importance, and making an occasional inquiry as to the state of the town and neighbourhood during his absence, in this fashion:—"Stop! where are you, host? Oh! you are there, Sir, are you? Well, Mr. Host, and how have we been?—orderly, eh?"

"Quite orderly, your worship."

"Hoh! Orderly! Hem! Well, very well! Never easy, if absent only four-and-twenty hours. The law must be obeyed."

"Yes, your worship."

"Lead on, Sir. And, waiter; where are you, waiter? Oh! you are there, Sir, are you? And so my brother magistrate is here?"

"Yes, your honour's worship."

"Hem! What can he want?—something in the wind; wants my advice, I dare say; shall have it. Soldiers ruly; king's servants; must be obeyed."

"Yes, your worship; quite ruly, your worship," said the host.

"As obliging and obstreperous as can be," said the waiter.

"Well, very well;" and here the Squire had gained the gallery, where the Doctor was ready to receive him.

"It always gives me pleasure to meet a brother magistrate," said Squire Mountmeadow, bowing with cordial condescension; "and a gentlemen of your cloth, too. The clergy must be respected; I stand or fall by the Church. After you, Doctor,—after you." So saying, the two magistrates entered the room.

"An unexpected pleasure, Doctor," said the Squire; "and what brings your worship to town?"

"A somewhat strange business," said the Doctor; "and indeed I am not a little glad to have the advantage of your advice and assistance."

"Hem! I thought so," said the Squire; "your worship is very complimentary. What is the case?—larceny?"

"Nay, my good Sir, 'tis a singular affair; and, if you please,

we will order supper first, and discuss it afterwards. 'Tis for your private ear."

"Oh! ho!" said the Squire, looking very mysterious and important. "With your worship's permission," he added, filling a pipe.

The host was no laggard in waiting on two such important guests. The brother magistrates despatched their rump-steak; the foaming tankard was replenished; the fire renovated. At length, the table and the room being alike clear, Squire Mountmeadow drew a long puff, and said, "Now for business, Doctor."

His companion then informed him of the exact object of his visit, and narrated to him so much of the preceding incidents as was necessary. The Squire listened in solemn silence, elevating his eyebrows, nodding his head, trimming his pipe, with profound interjections; and finally, being appealed to for his opinion by the Doctor, delivered himself of a most portentous "Hem!"

"I question, Doctor," said the Squire, "whether we should not communicate with the Secretary of State. 'Tis no ordinary business. 'Tis a spiriting away of a Peer of the realm. It smacks of treason."

"Egad!" said the Doctor, suppressing a smile, "I think we can hardly make a truant boy a Cabinet question."

The Squire glanced a look of pity at his companion. "Prove the truancy, Doctor; prove it. 'Tis a case of disappearance; and how do we know that there is not a Jesuit at the bottom of it?"

"There is something in that," said the Doctor.

"There is everything in it," said the Squire, triumphantly. "We must offer rewards; we must raise the posse comitatus."

"For the sake of the family, I would make as little stir as necessary," said Dr. Masham.

"For the sake of the family!" said the Squire. "Think of the nation, Sir! For the sake of the nation we must make as much stir as possible. 'Tis a Secretary of State's business; 'tis a case for a general warrant."

"He is a well-meaning lad enough," said the Doctor.

"Ay, and therefore more easily played upon," said the Squire. "Rome is at the bottom of it, brother Masham, and I am surprised that a good Protestant like yourself—one of the King's Justices of the Peace, and a Doctor of Divinity to boot—should doubt the fact for an instant."

"We have not heard much of the Jesuits of late years," said the Doctor.

"The very reason that they are more active," said the Squire.

"An only child!" said Dr. Masham.

"A Peer of the realm!" said Squire Mountmeadow.

"I should think he must be in the neighbourhood."

"More likely at St. Omer's."

"They would scarcely take him to the plantations with this war?"

"Let us drink 'Confusion to the rebels!'" said the Squire.
"Any news?"

"Howe sails this week," said the Doctor.

"May he burn Boston!" said the Squire.

"I would rather he would reduce it, without such extremities," said Dr. Masham.

"Nothing is to be done without extremities," said Squire Mount-meadow.

"But this poor child?" said the Doctor, leading back the conversation. "What can we do?"

"The law of the case is clear," said the Squire; "we must move a *habeas corpus*."

"But shall we be nearer getting him for that?" inquired the Doctor.

"Perhaps not, Sir; but 'tis the regular way. We must proceed by rule."

"I am sadly distressed," said Doctor Masham. "The worst is, he has gained such a start upon us; and yet he can hardly have gone to London;—he would have been recognised here or at Southport."

"With his hair cropped, and in a Jesuit's cap?" inquired the Squire, with a slight sneer. "Ah! Doctor, Doctor, you know not the gentry you have to deal with!"

"We must hope," said Dr. Masham. "To-morrow we must organize some general search."

"I fear it will be of no use," said the Squire, replenishing his pipe. "These Jesuits are deep fellows."

"But we are not sure about the Jesuits, Squire."

"I am," said the Squire; "the case is clear, and the sooner you break it to his mother the better. You asked me for my advice, and I give it you."

CHAPTER XVI.

It was on the following morning, as the Doctor was under the operation of the barber, that his groom ran into the room with a pale face and agitated air, and exclaimed,—

"Oh! master, master, what do you think? here is a man in the yard with my lord's pony."

"Stop him, Peter," exclaimed the Doctor; "No! watch him—watch him—send for a constable. Are you certain 'tis the pony?"

"I could swear to it out of a thousand," said Peter.

"There, never mind my beard, my good man," said the Doctor. "There is no time for appearances. Here is a robbery, at least; God grant no worse. Peter, my boots!" So saying, the Doctor, half equipped, and followed by Peter and the barber, went forth on the gallery. "Where is he?" said the Doctor.

"He is down below, talking to the ostler, and trying to sell the pony," said Peter.

"There is no time to lose," said the Doctor; "follow me, like true men:" and the Doctor ran down stairs in his silk nightcap, for his wig was not yet prepared.

"There he is," said Peter; and true enough there was a man in a smock-frock and mounted on the very pony which Lady Annabel had presented to Plantagenet.

"Seize this man in the King's name," said the Doctor, hastily advancing to him. "Ostler, do your duty; Peter, be firm. I charge you all; I am a justice of the peace. I charge you arrest this man."

The man seemed very much astonished; but he was composed, and offered no resistance. He was dressed like a small farmer, in top-boots and a smock-frock. His hat was rather jauntily placed on his curly red hair.

"Why am I seized?" at length said the man.

"Where did you get that pony?" said the Doctor.

"I bought it," was the reply.

"Of whom?"

"A stranger at market."

"You are accused of robbery, and suspected of murder," said Dr. Masham. "Mr. Constable," said the Doctor, turning to that functionary, who had now arrived, "handcuff this man, and keep him in strict custody until further orders."

The report that a man was arrested for robbery, and suspected of murder, at the Red Dragon, spread like wildfire through the town; and the inn-yard was soon crowded with the curious and excited inhabitants.

Peter and the barber, to whom he had communicated everything, were well qualified to do justice to the important information of which they were the sole depositaries; the tale lost nothing by their telling; and a circumstantial narrative of the robbery and murder of no less a personage than Lord Cadurcis, of Cadurcis Abbey, was soon generally prevalent.

The stranger was secured in a stable, before which the constable

kept guard ; mine host, and the waiter, and the ostlers, acted as a sort of supernumerary police, to repress the multitude ; while Peter held the real pony by the bridle, whose identity, which he frequently attested, was considered by all present as an incontrovertible evidence of the commission of the crime.

In the meantime Dr. Masham, really very agitated, roused his brother magistrate, and communicated to his worship the important discovery. The Squire fell into a solemn flutter. "We must be regular, brother Masham ; we must proceed by rule ; we are a bench in ourselves. Would that my clerk were here ! We must send for Signsealer forthwith. I will not decide without the statutes. The law must be consulted, and it must be obeyed. The fellow hath not brought my wig. 'Tis a case of murder, no doubt. A Peer of the realm murdered ! You must break the intelligence to his surviving parent, and I will communicate to the Secretary of State. Can the body be found ? That will prove the murder. Unless the body be found, the murder will not be proved, save the villain confess, which he will not do, unless he hath sudden compunctions. I have known sudden compunctions go a great way. We had a case before our bench last month ; there was no evidence. It was not a case of murder ; it was of woodcutting ; there was no evidence ; but the defendant had compunctions. Oh ! here is my wig. We must send for Signsealer. He is clerk to our bench, and he must bring the statutes. 'Tis not simple murder this ; it involves petty treason."

By this time his worship had completed his toilet, and he and his colleague took their way to the parlour they had inhabited the preceding evening. Mr. Signsealer was in attendance, much to the real, though concealed, satisfaction of Squire Mountmeadow. Their worships were seated like two consuls before the table, which Mr. Signsealer had duly arranged with writing materials and various piles of calf-bound volumes. Squire Mountmeadow then, arranging his countenance, announced that the bench was prepared, and mine host was instructed forthwith to summon the constable and his charge, together with Peter and the ostler as witnesses. There was a rush among some of the crowd who were nighest the scene to follow the prisoner into the room ; and, sooth to say, the great Mountmeadow was much too enamoured of his own self-importance to be by any means a patron of close courts and private hearings ; but then, though he loved his power to be witnessed, he was equally desirous that his person should be revered. It was his boast that he could keep a court of quarter sessions as quiet as a church ; and now, when the crowd rushed in with all those sounds of tumult incidental to such a movement, it required only Mountmeadow slowly to rise, and, drawing himself up to the full height of his gaunt figure, to

knit his severe brow, and throw one of his peculiar looks around the chamber, to insure a most awful stillness. Instantly everything was so hushed, that you might have heard Signsealer knib his pen.

The witnesses were sworn; Peter proved that the pony belonged to Lord Cadurcis, and that his lordship had been missing from home for several days, and was believed to have quitted the abbey on this identical pony. Dr. Masham was ready, if necessary, to confirm this evidence. The accused adhered to his first account, that he had purchased the animal the day before at a neighbouring fair, and doggedly declined to answer any cross-examination. Squire Mountmeadow looked alike pompous and puzzled; whispered to the Doctor; and then shook his head at Mr. Signsealer.

"I doubt whether there be satisfactory evidence of the murder, brother Masham," said the Squire; "what shall be our next step?"

"There is enough evidence to keep this fellow in custody," said the Doctor. "We must remand him, and make inquiries at the market town. I shall proceed there immediately. He is a strange-looking fellow," added the Doctor: "were it not for his carrotty locks, I should scarcely take him for a native."

"Hem!" said the Squire, "I have my suspicions. Fellow," continued his worship, in an awful tone, "you say that you are a stranger, and that your name is Morgan; very suspicious all this; you have no one to speak to your character or station, and you are found in possession of stolen goods. The bench will remand you for the present, and will at any rate commit you for trial for the robbery. But here is a Peer of the realm missing, fellow, and you are most grievously suspected of being concerned in his spiriting away, or even murder. You are upon tender ground, prisoner; 'tis a case verging on petty treason, if not petty treason itself. Eh! Mr. Signsealer? Thus runs the law, as I take it? Prisoner, it would be well for you to consider your situation. Have you no compunctions? Compunctions might save you, if not a principal offender. It is your duty to assist the bench in executing justice. The Crown is merciful; you may be king's evidence."

Mr. Signsealer whispered the bench; he proposed that the prisoner's hat should be examined, as the name of its maker might afford a clue to his residence.

"True, true, Mr. Clerk," said Squire Mountmeadow, "I am coming to that. 'Tis a sound practice; I have known such a circumstance lead to great disclosures. But we must proceed in order. Order is everything. Constable, take the prisoner's hat off."

The constable took the hat off somewhat rudely; so rudely, indeed, that the carrotty locks came off in company with it, and re-

vealed a profusion of long plaited hair, which had been adroitly twisted under the wig, more in character with the countenance than its previous covering.

"A Jesuit, after all!" exclaimed the Squire.

"A gipsy, as it seems to me," whispered the Doctor.

"Still worse," said the Squire.

"Silence in the Court!" exclaimed the awful voice of Squire Mountmeadow, for the excitement of the audience was considerable. The disguise was generally esteemed as incontestable evidence of the murder. "Silence, or I will order the Court to be cleared. Constable, proclaim silence. This is an awful business," added the Squire, with a very long face. "Brother Masham, we must do our duty; but this is an awful business. At any rate we must try to discover the body. A Peer of the realm must not be suffered to lie murdered in a ditch. He must have Christian burial, if possible, in the vaults of his ancestors."

When Morgana, for it was indeed he, observed the course affairs were taking, and ascertained that his detention under present circumstances was inevitable, he relaxed from his doggedness, and expressed a willingness to make a communication to the bench. Squire Mountmeadow lifted up his eyes to Heaven, as if entreating the interposition of Providence to guide him in his course; then turned to his brother magistrate, and then nodded to the clerk.

"He has compunctions, brother Masham," said his worship: "I told you so; he has compunctions. Trust me to deal with these fellows. He knew not his perilous situation; the hint of petty treason staggered him. Mr. Clerk, take down the prisoner's confession; the Court must be cleared; constable, clear the Court. Let a stout man stand on each side of the prisoner, to protect the bench. The magistracy of England will never shrink from doing their duty, but they must be protected. Now, prisoner, the bench is ready to hear your confession. Conceal nothing, and if you were not a principal in the murder, or an accessory before the fact; eh, Mr. Clerk, thus runs the law, as I take it? there may be mercy; at any rate, if you be hanged, you will have the satisfaction of having cheerfully made the only atonement to society in your power."

"Hanging be damned!" said Morgana.

Squire Mountmeadow started from his seat, his cheeks distended with rage, his dull eyes for once flashing fire. "Did you ever witness such atrocity, brother Masham?" exclaimed his worship. "Did you hear the villain? I'll teach him to respect the bench. I'll fine him before he is executed, that I will!"

"The young gentleman to whom this pony belongs," continued the gipsy, "may or may not be a lord. I never asked him

his name, and he never told it me; but he sought hospitality of me and my people, and we gave it him, and he lives with us, of his own free choice. The pony is of no use to him now, and so I came to sell it for our common good."

"A Peer of the realm turned gipsy!" exclaimed the Squire. "A very likely tale! I'll teach you to come here and tell your cock-and-bull stories to two of his majesty's justices of the peace. 'Tis a flat case of robbery and murder, and I venture to say something else. You shall go to gaol directly, and the Lord have mercy on your soul!"

"Nay," said the gipsy, appealing to Dr. Masham, "you, sir, appear to be a friend of this youth. You will not regain him by sending me to gaol. Load me, if you will, with irons, surround me with armed men, but at least give me the opportunity of proving the truth of what I say. I offer in two hours to produce to you the youth, and you shall find he is living with my people in content and peace."

"Content and hddlestiek!" said the Squire, in a rage.

"Brother Mountmeadow," said the Doctor, in a low tone, to his colleague, "I have private duties to perform to this family. Pardon me if, with all deference to your sounder judgment and greater experience, I myself accept the prisoner's offer."

"Brother Masham, you are one of his majesty's justices of the peace, you are a brother magistrate, and you are a Doctor of Divinity; you owe a duty to your country, and you owe a duty to yourself. Is it wise, is it decorous, that one of the Quorum should go a-gipsying? Is it possible that you can credit this preposterous tale? Brother Masham, there will be a rescue, or my name is not Mountmeadow."

In spite, however, of all these solemn warnings, the good Doctor, who was not altogether unaware of the character of his pupil, and could comprehend that it was very possible the statement of the gipsy might be genuine, continued without very much offending his colleague, who looked upon his conduct indeed rather with pity than resentment, to accept the offer of Morgana; and consequently, well-secured and guarded, and preceding the Doctor, who rode behind the cart with his servant, the gipsy soon sallied forth from the inn-yard, and requested the driver to guide his course in the direction of the forest.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was the afternoon of the third day after the arrival of Cadurcis at the gipsy encampment, and nothing had yet occurred to make him repent his flight from the abbey, and the choice of life

he had made. He had experienced nothing but kindness and hospitality, while the beautiful Beruna seemed quite content to pass her life in studying his amusement. The weather, too, had been extremely favourable to his new mode of existence; and, stretched at his length upon the rich turf, with his head on Beruna's lap, and his eyes fixed upon the rich forest foliage glowing in the autumnal sunset, Plantagenet only wondered that he could have endured for so many years the shackles of his common-place home.

His companions were awaiting the return of their leader, Morgana, who had been absent since the preceding day, and who had departed on Plantagenet's pony. Most of them were lounging or strolling in the vicinity of their tents; the children were playing; the old woman was cooking at the fire; and altogether, save that the hour was not so late, the scene presented much the same aspect as when Cadurcis had first beheld it. As for his present occupation, Beruna was giving him a lesson in the gipsy language, which he was acquiring with a rapid facility, which quite exceeded all his previous efforts in such acquisitions.

Suddenly a scout sang out that a party was in sight. The men instantly disappeared; the women were on the alert; and one ran forward as a spy, on pretence of telling fortunes. This bright-eyed professor of palmistry, soon, however, returned, running, and out of breath, yet chatting all the time with inconceivable rapidity, and accompanying the startling communication she was evidently making with the most animated gestures. Beruna started up, and, leaving the astonished Cadurcis, joined them. She seemed alarmed. Cadurcis was soon convinced there was consternation in the camp.

Suddenly a horseman galloped up, and was immediately followed by a companion. They called out, as if encouraging followers, and one of them immediately galloped away again, as if to detail the results of their reconnaissance. Before Cadurcis could well rise and make inquiries as to what was going on, a light cart, containing several men, drove up, and in it, a prisoner, he detected Morgana. The branches of the trees concealed for a moment two other horsemen who followed the cart; but Cadurcis, to his infinite alarm and mortification, soon recognised Dr. Masham and Peter.

When the gipsies found their leader was captive, they no longer attempted to conceal themselves; they all came forward, and would have clustered round the cart, had not the riders, as well as those who more immediately guarded the prisoner, prevented them. Morgana spoke some words in a loud voice to the gipsies, and they immediately appeared less agitated; then turning to Dr. Masham, he said in English, "Behold your child!"

Instantly two gipsy men seized Cadurcis, and led him to the Doctor.

"How now, my lord!" said the worthy Rector, in a stern voice, "is this your duty to your mother and your friends?"

Cadureis looked down, but rather dogged than ashamed.

"You have brought an innocent man into great peril," continued the Doctor. "This person, no longer a prisoner, has been arrested on suspicion of robbery, and even murder, through your freak. Morgana, or whatever your name may be, here is some reward for your treatment of this child, and some compensation for your detention. Mount your pony, Lord Cadureis, and return to your home with me."

"This is my home, Sir," said Plantagenet.

"Lord Cadureis, this childish nonsense must cease; it has already endangered the life of your mother, nor can I answer for her safety, if you lose a moment in returning."

"Child, you must return," said Morgana.

"Child!" said Plantagenet, and he walked some steps away, and leant against a tree. "You promised that I should remain," said he, addressing himself reproachfully to Morgana.

"You are not your own master," said the gipsy; "your remaining here will only endanger and disturb us. Fortunately we have nothing to fear from laws we have never outraged; but had there been a judge less wise and gentle than the master here, our peaceful family might have been all harassed and hunted to the very death."

He waved his hand, and addressed some words to his tribe, whereupon two brawny fellows seized Cadureis, and placed him again, in spite of his struggling, upon his pony, with the same irresistible facility with which they had a few nights before dismounted him. The little lord looked very sulky, but his position was beginning to get ludicrous. Morgana, pocketing his five guineas, leaped over the side of the cart, and offered to guide the Doctor and his attendants through the forest. They moved on accordingly. It was the work of an instant, and Cadureis suddenly found himself returning home between the Rector and Peter. Not a word, however, escaped his lips; once only he moved; the light branch of a tree, aimed with delicate precision, touched his back; he looked round; it was Beruna. She kissed her hand to him, and a tear stole down his pale, sullen cheek, as, taking from his breast his handkerchief, he threw it behind him, unperceived, that she might pick it up, and keep it for his sake.

After proceeding two or three miles under the guidance of Morgana, the equestrians gained the road, though it still ran through the forest. Here the Doctor dismissed the gipsy-man, with whom he had occasionally conversed during their progress; but not a sound ever escaped from the mouth of Cadureis, or rather, the cap-

tive who was now substituted in Morgana's stead. The Doctor, now addressing himself to Plantagenet, informed him that it was of importance that they should make the best of their way, and so he put spurs to his mare, and Cadurcis sullenly complied with the intimation. At this rate, in the course of little more than another hour, they arrived in sight of the demesne of Cadurcis, where they pulled up their steeds.

They entered the park—they approached the portal of the abbey—at length they dismounted. Their coming was announced by a servant, who had recognised his lord at a distance, and had ran on before with the tidings. When they entered the abbey, they were met by Lady Annabel in the cloisters; her countenance was very serious. She shook hands with Dr. Masham, but did not speak, and immediately led him aside. Cadurcis remained standing in the very spot where Doctor Masham left him, as if he were quite a stranger in the place, and was no longer master of his own conduct. Suddenly Doctor Masham—who was at the end of the cloister, while Lady Annabel was mounting the staircase—looked round with a very pale face, and said in an agitated voice, “Lord Cadurcis, Lady Annabel wishes to speak to you in the saloon.”

Cadurcis immediately, but slowly, repaired to the saloon. Lady Annabel was walking up and down in it. She seemed greatly disturbed. When she saw him, she put her arm round his neck very affectionately, and said in a low voice, “My dearest Plantagenet, it has devolved upon me to communicate to you some very distressing intelligence.” Her voice faltered, and the tears stole down her cheek.

“My mother, then, is dangerously ill?” he inquired in a calm but softened tone.

“It is even sadder news than that, dear child.”

Cadurcis looked about him wildly, and then with an inquiring glance at Lady Annabel—

“There can be but one thing worse than that,” he at length said.

“What if it have happened?” said Lady Annabel.

He threw himself into a chair, and covered his face with his hands. After a few minutes he looked up and said, in a low but distinct voice—“It is too terrible to think of; it is too terrible to mention; but, if it have happened, let me be alone.”

Lady Annabel approached him with a light step; she embraced him, and, whispering that she should be found in the next room, she quitted the apartment.

Cadurcis remained seated for more than half an hour without changing in the slightest degree his position. The twilight died

away; it grew quite dark; he looked up with a slight shiver, and then quitted the apartment.

In the adjoining room, Lady Annabel was seated with Doctor Masham, and giving him the details of the fatal event. It had occurred that morning. Mrs. Cadurcis, who had never slept a wink since her knowledge of her son's undoubted departure, and scarcely for an hour been free from violent epileptic fits, had fallen early in the morning into a doze, which lasted about half an hour, and from which her medical attendant, who with Pauncefort had sat up with her during the night, augured the most favourable consequences. About half-past six o'clock she woke, and inquired whether Plantagenet had returned. They answered her that Doctor Masham had not yet arrived, but would probably be at the abbey in the course of the morning. She said it would be too late. They endeavoured to encourage her, but she asked to see Lady Annabel, who was immediately called, and lost no time in repairing to her. When Mrs. Cadurcis recognised her, she held out her hand, and said in a dying tone—"It was my fault; it was ever my fault; it is too late now; let him find a mother in you." She never spoke again, and in the course of an hour expired.

While Lady Annabel and the Doctor were dwelling on these sad circumstances, and debating whether he should venture to approach Plantagenet, and attempt to console him,—for the evening was now far advanced, and nearly three hours had elapsed since the fatal communication had been made to him,—it happened that Mistress Pauncefort chanced to pass Mrs. Cadurcis' room, and as she did so she heard some one violently sobbing. She listened, and hearing the sounds frequently repeated, she entered the room, which, but for her candle, would have been quite dark, and there she found Lord Cadurcis kneeling and weeping by his mother's bed-side. He seemed annoyed at being seen and disturbed, but his spirit was too broken to murmur. "La! my lord," said Mistress Pauncefort, "you must not take on so; you must not indeed. I am sure this dark room is enough to put any one in low spirits. Now do go down stairs, and sit with my lady and the Doctor, and try to be cheerful; that is a dear good young gentleman. I wish Miss Venetia were here, and then she would amuse you. But you must not take on, because there is no use in it. You must exert yourself, for what is done cannot be undone; and, as the Doctor told us last Sunday, we must all die; and well for those who die with a good conscience; and I am sure the poor dear lady that is gone, must have had a good conscience, because she had a good heart, and I never heard any one say the contrary. Now do exert yourself, my dear lord, and try to be cheerful, do; for there is nothing like a little exertion

in these cases, for God's will must be done, and it is not for us to say yea or nay, and taking on is a murmuring against God's providence." And so Mistress Pauncefort would have continued urging the usual topics of coarse and common-place consolation; but Cadurcis only answered with a sigh that came from the bottom of his heart, and said with streaming eyes, "Ah! Mrs. Pauncefort, God had only given me one friend in this world, and there she lies."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE first conviction that there is death in the house is perhaps the most awful moment of youth. When we are young, we think that not only ourselves, but that all about us, are immortal. Until the arrow has struck a victim round our own hearth, death is merely an unmeaning word; until then, its casual mention has stamped no idea upon our brain. There are few, even among those least susceptible of thought and emotion, in whose hearts and minds the first death in the family does not act as a very powerful revelation of the mysteries of life, and of their own being; there are few who, after such a catastrophe, do not look upon the world and the world's ways, at least for a time, with changed and tempered feelings. It recalls the past; it makes us ponder over the future; and youth, gay and light-hearted youth, is taught, for the first time, to regret and to fear.

On Cadurcis, a child of pensive temperament, and in whose strange and yet undeveloped character there was, amid lighter elements, a constitutional principle of melancholy, the sudden decease of his mother produced a very profound effect. All was forgotten of his parent, except the intimate and natural tie, and her warm and genuine affection. He was now alone in the world; for reflection impressed upon him at this moment what the course of existence too generally teaches to us all, that mournful truth, that, after all, we have no friends that we can depend upon in this life but our parents. All other intimacies, however ardent, are liable to cool; all other confidence, however unlimited, to be violated. In the phantasmagoria of life, the friend with whom we have cultivated mutual trust for years is often suddenly or gradually estranged from us, or becomes, from painful, yet irresistible circumstances, even our deadliest foe. As for women, as for the mistresses of our hearts, who has not learnt that the links of passion are fragile as they are glittering; and that the bosom on which we have reposed with idolatry all our secret sorrows and sanguine hopes, eventually becomes the very heart that exults in our misery and baffles our

welfare? Where is the enamoured face that smiled upon our early love, and was to shed tears over our grave? Where are the choice companions of our youth, with whom we were to breast the difficulties and share the triumphs of existence? Even in this inconstant world, what changes like the heart? Love is a dream, and friendship a delusion. No wonder we grow callous; for how few have the opportunity of returning to the hearth which they quitted in levity or thoughtless weariness, yet which alone is faithful to them; whose sweet affections require not the stimulus of prosperity or fame, the lure of accomplishments, or the tribute of flattery; but which are constant to us in distress, and console us even in disgrace!

Before she retired for the night, Lady Annabel was anxious to see Plantagenet. Mistress Pauncefort had informed her of his visit to his mother's room. Lady Annabel found Cadurcis in the gallery, now partially lighted by the moon which had recently risen. She entered with her light, as if she were on her way to her own room, and not seeking him.

"Dear Plantagenet," she said, "will you not go to bed?"

"I do not intend to go to bed to-night," he replied.

She approached him and took him by the hand, which he did not withdraw from her, and they walked together once or twice up and down the gallery.

"I think, dear child," said Lady Annabel, "you had better come and sit with us."

"I like to be alone," was his answer; but not in a sullen voice, low and faltering.

"But in sorrow we should be with our friends," said Lady Annabel.

"I have no friends," he answered. "I only had one."

"I am your friend, dear child; I am your mother now, and you shall find me one if you like. And Venetia, have you forgotten your sister? Is she not your friend? And Dr. Masham, surely you cannot doubt his friendship?"

Cadurcis tried to stifle a sob. "Ay, Lady Annabel," he said, "you are my friend now, and so are you all; and you know I love you very much. But you were not my friends two years ago; and things will change again; they will, indeed. A mother is your friend as long as she lives; she cannot help being your friend."

"You shall come to Cherbury, and live with us," said Lady Annabel. "You know you love Cherbury, and you shall find it a home, a real home."

He pressed her hand to his lips; the hand was covered with his tears.

"We will go to Cherbury to-morrow, dear Plantagenet; remaining here will only make you sad."

"I will never leave Cadurcis again while my mother is in this house," he said, in a firm and serious voice. And then, after a moment's pause, he added, "I wish to know when the burial is to take place."

"We will ask Dr. Masham," replied Lady Annabel. "Come, let us go to him; come, my own child."

He permitted himself to be led away. They descended to the small apartment where Lady Annabel had been previously sitting. They found the Doctor there; he rose and pressed Plantagenet's hand with great emotion. They made room for him at the fire between them; he sat in silence with his gaze intently fixed upon the decaying embers, yet did not quit his hold of Lady Annabel's hand. He found it a consolation to him; it linked him to a being who seemed to love him. As long as he held her hand he did not seem quite alone in the world.

Now nobody spoke; for Lady Annabel felt that Cadurcis was in some degree solaced; and she thought it unwise to interrupt the more composed train of his thoughts. It was, indeed, Plantagenet himself who first broke silence.

"I do not think I can go to bed, Lady Annabel," he said. "The thought of this night is terrible to me. I do not think it ever can end. I would much sooner sit up in this room."

"Nay! my child, sleep is a great consoler; try to go to bed, love."

"I should like to sleep in my mother's room," was his strange reply. "It seems to me that I could sleep there. And if I woke in the night, I should like to see her."

Lady Annabel and the Doctor exchanged looks.

"I think," said the Doctor, "you had better sleep in my room, and then, if you wake in the night, you will have some one to speak to. You will find that a comfort."

"Yes, that you will," said Lady Annabel. "I will go and have the sofa bed made up in the Doctor's room for you. Indeed that will be the very best plan."

So at last, but not without a struggle, they persuaded Cadurcis to retire. Lady Annabel embraced him tenderly when she bade him good night; and, indeed, he felt consoled by her affection.

As nothing could persuade Plantagenet to leave the abbey until his mother was buried, Lady Annabel resolved to take up her abode there, and she sent the next morning for Venetia. There were a great many arrangements to make about the burial and the mourning; and Lady Annabel and Dr. Masham were obliged, in consequence, to go the next morning to Southport; but they delayed their departure until the arrival of Venetia, that Cadurcis might not be left alone.

The meeting between himself and Venetia was a very sad one, and yet her companionship was a great solace. Venetia urged every topic that she fancied could reassure his spirits, and upon the happy home he would find at Cherbury.

“Ah!” said Cadurcis, “they will not leave me here; I am sure of that. I think our happy days are over, Venetia.”

What mourner has not felt the magic of time? Before the funeral could take place, Cadurcis had recovered somewhat of his usual cheerfulness, and would indulge with Venetia in plans of their future life. And living, as they all were, under the same roof, sharing the same sorrows, participating in the same cares, and all about to wear the same mournful emblems of their domestic calamity, it was difficult for him to believe that he was indeed that desolate being he had at first correctly estimated himself. Here were true friends, if such could exist; here were fine sympathies, pure affections, innocent and disinterested hearts! Every domestic tie yet remained perfect, except the spell-bound tie of blood. That wanting, all was a bright and happy vision, that might vanish in an instant, and for ever; that perfect, even the least graceful, the most repulsive home, had its irresistible charms; and its loss, when once experienced, might be mourned for ever, and could never be restored.

CHAPTER XIX.

AFTER the funeral of Mrs. Cadurcis, the family returned to Cherbury with Plantagenet, who was hereafter to consider it his home. All that the most tender solicitude could devise to reconcile him to the change in his life was fulfilled by Lady Annabel and her daughter, and, under their benignant influence, he soon regained his usual demeanour. His days were now spent as in the earlier period of their acquaintance, with the exception of those painful returns to home, which had once been a source to him of so much gloom and unhappiness. He pursued his studies as of old, and shared the amusements of Venetia. His allotted room was ornamented by her drawings, and in the evenings they read aloud by turns to Lady Annabel the volume which she selected. The abbey he never visited again after his mother's funeral.

Some weeks had passed in this quiet and contented manner, when one day Doctor Masham, who, since the death of his mother, had been in correspondence with his guardian, received a letter from that nobleman, to announce that he had made arrangements for sending his ward to Eton, and to request that he would accordingly instantly proceed to the metropolis. This announce-

ment occasioned both Cadurcis and Venetia poignant affliction. The idea of separation was to both of them most painful; and although Lady Annabel herself was in some degree prepared for an arrangement, which sooner or later she considered inevitable, she was herself scarcely less distressed. The good Doctor, in some degree to break the bitterness of parting, proposed accompanying Plantagenet to London, and himself personally delivering the charge, in whose welfare they were so much interested, to his guardian. Nevertheless, it was a very sad affair, and the week which was to intervene before his departure found both himself and Venetia often in tears. They no longer took any delight in their mutual studies, but passed the day walking about and visiting old haunts, and endeavouring to console each other for what they both deemed a great calamity, and which was, indeed, the only serious misfortune Venetia had herself experienced in the whole course of her serene career.

"But if I were really your brother," said Plantagenet, "I must have quitted you the same, Venetia. Boys always go to school; and then we shall be so happy when I return!"

"Oh! but we are so happy now, Plantagenet. I cannot believe that we are going to part. And are you sure that you will return? Perhaps your guardian will not let you, and will wish you to spend your holidays at his house. His house will be your home now."

It was impossible for a moment to forget the sorrow that was impending over them. There were so many preparations to be made for his departure, that every instant something occurred to remind them of their sorrow. Venetia sat with tears in her eyes marking his new pocket-handkerchiefs which they had all gone to Southport to purchase, for Plantagenet asked, as a particular favour, that no one should mark them but Venetia. Then Lady Annabel gave Plantagenet a writing-case, and Venetia filled it with pens and paper, that he might never want means to communicate with them; and her evenings were passed in working him a purse, which Lady Annabel took care should be well stocked. All day long there seemed something going on to remind them of what was about to happen; and as for Pauncefort, she flounced in and out the room fifty times a-day, with "What is to be done about my lord's shirts, my lady? I think his lordship had better have another dozen, your la'ship. Better too much than too little, I always say;" or, "O! my lady, your la'ship cannot form an idea of what a state my lord's stockings are in, my lady. I think I had better go over to Southport with John, my lady and buy him some;" or, "Please, my lady, did I understand your la'ship spoke to the tailor on Thursday about my lord's things? suppose your la'ship knows my lord has got no great-coat?"

Every one of these inquiries made Venetia's heart tremble. Then there was the sad habit of dating every coming day by its distance from the fatal one. There was the last day but four, and the last day but three, and the last day but two. The last day but one at length arrived; and at length, too, though it seemed incredible, the last day itself.

Plantagenet and Venetia both rose very early, that they might make it as long as possible. They sighed involuntarily when they met, and then they went about to pay last visits to every creature and object of which they had been so long fond. Plantagenet went to bid farewell to the horses and adieu to the cows, and then walked down to the woodman's cottage, and then to shake hands with the keeper. He would not say "Good-bye" to the household until the very last moment; and as for Marmion, the bloodhound, he accompanied both of them so faithfully in this melancholy ramble, and kept so close to both, that it was useless to break the sad intelligence to him yet.

"I think now, Venetia, we have been to see everything," said Plantagenet, "I shall see the peacocks at breakfast time. I wish Eton was near Cherbury, and then I could come home on Sunday. I cannot bear going to Cadurcis again, but I should like you to go once a week, and try to keep up our garden, and look after everything, though there is not much that will not take care of itself, except the garden. We made that together, and I could not bear its being neglected."

Venetia could not assure him that no wish of his should be neglected, because she was weeping.

"I am glad the Doctor," he continued, "is going to take me to town. I should be very wretched by myself. But he will put me in mind of Cherbury, and we can talk together of Lady Annabel and you. Hark! the bell rings; we must go to breakfast, the last breakfast but one."

Lady Annabel endeavoured, by unusual good spirits, to cheer up her little friends. She spoke of Plantagenet's speedy return so much as a matter of course, and the pleasant things they were to do when he came back, that she really succeeded in exciting a smile in Venetia's April face, for she was smiling amid tears.

Although it was the last day, time hung heavily on their hands. After breakfast they went over the house together; and Cadurcis, half with genuine feeling, and half in a spirit of mockery of their sorrow, made a speech to the inanimate walls, as if they were aware of his intended departure. At length, in their progress, they passed the door of the closed apartments, and here, holding Venetia's hand, he stopped, and, with an expression of irresistible humour, making a very low bow to them, he said, very gravely, "And good-bye rooms

that I have never entered ; perhaps, before I come back, Venetia will find out what is locked up in you ! ”

Doctor Masham arrived for dinner, and in a post chaise. The unusual conveyance reminded them of the morrow very keenly. Venetia could not bear to see the Doctor's portmanteau taken out and carried into the hall. She had hopes, until then, that something would happen and prevent all this misery. Cadureis whispered her, “ I say, Venetia, do not you wish this was winter ? ”

“ Why, Plantagenet ? ”

“ Because then we might have a good snow-storm, and be blocked up again for a week. ”

Venetia looked at the sky, but not a cloud was to be seen.

The Doctor was glad to warm himself at the hall-fire, for it was a fresh autumnal afternoon.

“ Are you cold, Sir ? ” said Venetia, approaching him.

“ I am, my little maiden, ” said the Doctor.

“ Do you think there is any chance of its snowing, Doctor Masham ? ”

“ Snowing ! my little maiden ; what can you be thinking of ? ”

The dinner was rather gayer than might have been expected. The Doctor was jocular, Lady Annabel very lively, and Plantagenet excited by an extraordinary glass of wine. Venetia alone remained dispirited. The Doctor made mock speeches and proposed toasts, and told Plantagenet that he must learn to make speeches too, or what would he do when he was in the House of Lords ? And then Plantagenet tried to make a speech, and proposed Venetia's health ; and then Venetia, who could not bear to hear herself praised by him on such a day—the last day—burst into tears. Her mother called her to her side and consoled her, and Plantagenet jumped up and wiped her eyes with one of those very pocket-handkerchiefs on which she had embroidered his cipher and coronet with her own beautiful hair.

Towards evening Plantagenet began to experience the re-action of his artificial spirits. The Doctor had fallen into a gentle slumber, Lady Annabel had quitted the room, Venetia sat with her hand in Plantagenet's on a stool by the fire-side. Both were very sad and silent. At last Venetia said, “ O Plantagenet, I wish I were your real sister ! Perhaps, when I see you again, you will forget this, ” and she turned the jewel that was suspended round her neck, and showed him the inscription.

“ I am sure when I see you again, Venetia, ” he replied, “ the only difference will be, that I shall love you more than ever. ”

“ I hope so, ” said Venetia.

“ I am sure of it. Now remember what we are talking about.

When we meet again, we shall see which of us two will love each other the most."

"O Plantagenet, I hope they will be kind to you at Eton."

"I will make them."

"And, whenever you are the least unhappy, you will write to us?"

"I shall never be unhappy about anything but being away from you. As for the rest, I will make people respect me; I know what I am."

"Because if they do not behave well to you, mamma could ask Dr. Masham to go and see you, and they will attend to him; and I would ask him too."

"I wonder," she continued after a moment's pause, "if you have everything you want. I am quite sure the instant you are gone, we shall remember something you ought to have; and then I shall be quite brokenhearted."

"I have got everything."

"You said you wanted a large knife."

"Yes! but I am going to buy one in London. Doctor Masham says he will take me to a place where the finest knives in the world are to be bought. It is a great thing to go to London with Doctor Masham."

"I have never written your name in your Bible and Prayer-book. I will do it this evening."

"Lady Annabel is to write it in the Bible, and you are to write it in the Prayer-book."

"You are to write to us from London by Doctor Masham, if only a line."

"I shall not fail."

"Never mind about your hand-writing; but mind you write."

At this moment Lady Annabel's step was heard, and Plantagenet said, "Give me a kiss, Venetia, for I do not mean to bid good-bye to-night."

"But you will not go to-morrow before we are up?"

"Yes, we shall."

"Now, Plantagenet, I shall be up to bid you good-bye; mind that."

Lady Annabel entered, the Doctor woke, lights followed, the servant made up the fire, and the room looked cheerful again. After tea, the names were duly written in the Bible and Prayer-book; the last arrangements were made, all the baggage was brought down into the hall, all ransacked their memory and fancy, to see if it were possible that anything that Plantagenet could require was either forgotten or had been omitted. The clock struck ten; Lady

Annabel rose. The travellers were to part at an early hour : she shook hands with Doctor Masham, but Cadurcis was to bid her farewell in her dressing-room, and then, with heavy hearts and glistening eyes, they all separated. And thus ended the last day !

CHAPTER XX.

VENETIA passed a restless night. She was so resolved to be awake in time for Plantagenet's departure, that she could not sleep ; and at length, towards morning, fell, from exhaustion, into a light slumber, from which she sprang up convulsively, roused by the sound of the wheels of the post-chaise. She looked out of her window, and saw the servant strapping on the portmanteaus. Shortly after this she heard Plantagenet's step in the vestibule ; he passed her room, and proceeded to her mother's dressing-room, at the door of which she heard him knock, and then there was silence.

"You are in good time," said Lady Annabel, who was seated in an easy chair when Plantagenet entered her room. "Is the Doctor up?"

"He is breakfasting."

"And have you breakfasted?"

"I have no appetite."

"You should take something, my child, before you go. Now, come hither, my dear Plantagenet," she said, extending her hand "listen to me, one word. When you arrive in London, you will go to your guardian's. He is a great man, and I believe a very good one, and the law and your father's will have placed him in the position of a parent to you. You must therefore love, honour, and obey him ; and I doubt not he will deserve all your affection, respect, and duty. Whatever he desires or counsels you will perform and follow. So long as you act according to his wishes, you cannot be wrong. But, my dear Plantagenet, if by any chance it ever happens, for strange things sometimes happen in this world, that you are in trouble and require a friend, remember that Cherbury is also your home ; the home of your heart, if not of the law ; and that not merely from my own love for you, but because I promised your poor mother on her death-bed, I esteem myself morally, although not legally, in the light of a parent to you. You will find Eton a great change ; you will experience many trials and temptations ; but you will triumph over and withstand them all, if you will attend to these few directions. Fear God ; morning and night let nothing induce you ever to omit your prayers to Him ; you will find that praying will make you happy. Obey your superiors ; always treat

your masters with respect. Ever speak the truth. So long as you adhere to this rule, you never can be involved in any serious misfortune. A deviation from truth is, in general, the foundation of all misery. Be kind to your companions, but be firm. Do not be laughed into doing that which you know to be wrong. Be modest and humble, but ever respect yourself. Remember who you are, and also that it is your duty to excel. Providence has given you a great lot. Think ever that you are born to perform great duties.

"God bless you, Plantagenet!" continued her ladyship, after a slight pause, with a faltering voice—"God bless you, my sweet child. And God will bless you if you remember Him. Try also to remember us," she added, as she embraced him, and placed in his hand Venetia's well-lined purse. "Do not forget Cherbury and all it contains; hearts that love you dearly, and will pray ever for your welfare."

Plantagenet leant upon her bosom. He had entered the room resolved to be composed, with an air even of cheerfulness, but his tender heart yielded to the first appeal to his affections. He could only murmur out some broken syllables of devotion, and almost unconsciously found that he had quitted the chamber.

With streaming eyes and hesitating steps he was proceeding along the vestibule, when he heard his name called by a low sweet voice. He looked around; it was Venetia. Never had he beheld such a beautiful vision. She was muffled up in her dressing-gown, her small white feet only guarded from the cold by her slippers. Her golden hair seemed to reach her waist, her cheek was flushed, her large blue eyes glittered with tears.

"Plantagenet," she said—

Neither of them could speak. They embraced, they mingled their tears together, and every instant they wept more plenteously. At length a footstep was heard; Venetia murmured a blessing, and vanished.

Cadurcis lingered on the stairs a moment to compose himself. He wiped his eyes; he tried to look undisturbed. All the servants were in the hall; from Mistress Pauncefort to the scullion there was not a dry eye. All loved the little lord, he was so gracious and so gentle. Every one asked leave to touch his hand before he went. He tried to smile and say something kind to all. He recognised the gamekeeper, and told him to do what he liked at Cadurcis; said something to the coachman about his pony; and begged Mistress Pauncefort, quite aloud, to take great care of her young mistress. As he was speaking, he felt something rubbing against his hand: it was Marmion, the old bloodhound. He also came to bid his adieus. Cadurcis patted him with great affection, and said, "Ah! my old fellow, we shall yet meet again."

The Doctor appeared, smiling as usual, made his inquiries whether all were right, nodded to the weeping household, called Plantagenet his brave boy, and patted him on the back, and bade him jump into the chaise. Another moment, and Doctor Masham had also entered; the door was closed, the fatal "All right" sung out, and Lord Cadurcis was whirled away from that Cherbury where he was so loved.

THE END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

LIFE is not dated merely by years. Events are sometimes the best calendars. There are epochs in our existence which cannot be ascertained by a formal appeal to the registry. The arrival of the Cadurcis family at their old abbey, their consequent intimacy at Cherbury, the death of the mother, and the departure of the son—these were events which had been crowded into a space of less than two years; but those two years were not only the most eventful in the life of Venetia Herbert, but in their influence upon the development of her mind, and the formation of her character, far exceeded the effects of all her previous existence.

Venetia once more found herself with no companion but her mother, but in vain she attempted to recall the feelings she had before experienced under such circumstances, and to revert to the resources she had before commanded. No longer could she wander in imaginary kingdoms, or transform the limited world of her experience into a boundless region of enchanted amusement. Her play-pleasure hours were fled for ever. She sighed for her faithful and sympathising companion. The empire of fancy yielded without a struggle to the conquering sway of memory.

For the first few weeks Venetia was restless and dispirited, and when she was alone she often wept. A mysterious instinct prompted her, however, not to exhibit such emotion before her mother. Yet she loved to hear Lady Annabel talk of Plantagenet, and a visit to the abbey was ever her favourite walk. Sometimes, too, a letter arrived from Lord Cadurcis, and this was great joy, but such communications were rare. Nothing is more difficult than for a junior boy at a public school to maintain a correspondence; yet his letters were most affectionate, and always dwelt upon the prospect of his return. The period for this hoped-for return at length arrived,

but it brought no Plantagenet. His guardian wished that the holidays should be spent under his roof. Still at intervals Cadureis wrote to Cherbury, to which, as time flew on, it seemed destined he never was to return. Vacation followed vacation, alike passed with his guardian, either in London, or at a country seat still more remote from Cherbury, until at length it became so much a matter of course that his guardian's house should be esteemed his home, that Plantagenet ceased to allude even to the prospect of return. In time his letters became rarer and rarer, until, at length, they altogether ceased. Meanwhile Venetia had overcome the original pang of separation; if not as gay as in old days, she was serene and very studious; delighting less in her flowers and birds, but much more in her books, and pursuing her studies with an earnestness and assiduity which her mother was rather fain to check than to encourage. Venetia Herbert, indeed, promised to become a most accomplished woman. She had a fine ear for music, a ready tongue for languages; already she emulated her mother's skill in the arts; while the library of Cherbury afforded welcome and inexhaustible resources to a girl whose genius deserved the richest and most sedulous cultivation, and whose peculiar situation, independent of her studious predisposition, rendered reading a pastime to her rather than a task. Lady Annabel watched the progress of her daughter with lively interest, and spared no efforts to assist the formation of her principles and her taste. That deep religious feeling which was the characteristic of the mother had been carefully and early cherished in the heart of the child, and in time the unrivalled writings of the great divines of our Church became a principal portion of her reading. Order, method, severe study, strict religious exercise, with no amusement or relaxation but of the most simple and natural character, and with a complete seclusion from society, altogether formed a system, which, acting upon a singularly susceptible and gifted nature, secured the promise in Venetia Herbert, at fourteen years of age, of a very extraordinary woman; a system, however, against which her lively and somewhat restless mind might probably have rebelled, had not that system been so thoroughly imbued with all the melting spell of maternal affection. It was the inspiration of this sacred love that hovered like a guardian angel over the life of Venetia. It roused her from her morning slumbers with an embrace, it sanctified her evening pillow with a blessing; it anticipated the difficulty of the student's page, and guided the faltering hand of the hesitating artist; it refreshed her memory, it modulated her voice; it accompanied her in the cottage, and knelt by her at the altar. Marvellous and beautiful is a mother's love! And when Venetia, with her strong feelings and enthusiastic spirit, would look around and

mark that a graceful form and a bright eye were for ever watching over her wants and wishes, instructing with sweetness, and soft even with advice, her whole soul rose to her mother, all thoughts and feelings were concentrated in that sole existence, and she desired no happier destiny than to pass through life living in the light of her mother's smiles, and clinging with passionate trust to that beneficent and guardian form.

But with all her quick and profound feelings Venetia was thoughtful, and even shrewd, and when she was alone her very love for her mother, and her gratitude for such an ineffable treasure as parental affection, would force her mind to a subject which at intervals had haunted her even from her earliest childhood. Why had she only one parent? What mystery was this that enveloped that great tie? For that there was a mystery Venetia felt as assured as that she was a daughter. By a process which she could not analyse, her father had become a forbidden subject. True, Lady Annabel had placed no formal prohibition upon its mention; nor at her present age was Venetia one who would be influenced in her conduct by the by-gone and arbitrary intimations of a menial; nevertheless, that the mention of her father would afford pain to the being she loved best in the world, was a conviction which had grown with her years and strengthened with her strength. Pardonable, natural, even laudable as was the anxiety of the daughter upon such a subject, an instinct with which she could not struggle closed the lips of Venetia for ever upon this topic. His name was never mentioned, his past existence was never alluded to. Who was he? That he was of noble family and great position her name betokened, and the state in which they lived. He must have died very early; perhaps, even before her mother gave her birth. A dreadful lot indeed; and yet was the grief that even such a dispensation might occasion, so keen, so overwhelming, that after fourteen long years his name might not be permitted, even for an instant, to pass the lips of his bereaved wife? Was his child to be deprived of the only solace for his loss, the consolation of cherishing his memory? Strange, passing strange indeed, and very bitter! At Cherbury the family of Herbert were honoured only from tradition. Until the arrival of Lady Annabel, as we have before mentioned, they had not resided at the hall for more than half a century. There were no old retainers there from whom Venetia might glean without suspicion, the information for which she panted. Slight, too, as was Venetia's experience of society, there were times when she could not resist the impression that her mother was not happy; that there was some secret sorrow that weighed upon her spirit, some grief that gnawed at her heart. Could it be still the recollection of her lost sire? Could

one so religious, so resigned, so assured of meeting the lost one in a better world, brood with a repining soul over the will of her Creator? Such conduct was entirely at variance with all the tenets of Lady Annabel. It was not thus she consoled the bereaved, that she comforted the widow, and solaced the orphan. Venetia, too, observed everything and forgot nothing. Not an incident of her earliest childhood that was not as fresh in her memory as if it had occurred yesterday. Her memory was naturally keen; living in solitude, with nothing to distract it, its impressions never faded away. She had never forgotten her mother's tears the day that she and Plantagenet had visited Marringhurst. Somehow or other Dr. Masham seemed connected with this sorrow. Whenever Lady Annabel was most dispirited it was after an interview with that gentleman; yet the presence of the Doctor always gave her pleasure, and he was the most kind-hearted and cheerful of men. Perhaps, after all, it was only her illusion; perhaps, after all, it was the memory of her father to which her mother was devoted, and which occasionally overcame her; perhaps she ventured to speak of him to Dr. Masham, though not to her daughter, and this might account for that occasional agitation which Venetia had observed at his visits. And yet, and yet, and yet—in vain she reasoned. There is a strange sympathy which whispers convictions that no evidence can authorise, and no arguments dispel. Venetia Herbert, particularly as she grew older, could not refrain at times from yielding to the irresistible belief that her existence was enveloped in some mystery. Mystery too often presupposes the idea of guilt. Guilt! Who was guilty? Venetia shuddered at the current of her own thoughts. She started from the garden seat in which she had fallen into this dangerous and painful reverie; flew to her mother, who received her with smiles; and buried her face in the bosom of Lady Annabel.

CHAPTER II.

WE have indicated in a few pages the progress of three years. How differently passed to the two preceding ones, when the Cadurcis family were settled at the abbey! For during this latter period it seemed that not a single incident had occurred. They had glided away in one unbroken course of study, religion, and domestic love, the enjoyment of nature, and the pursuits of charity; like a long summer sabbath-day, sweet and serene and still, undisturbed by a single passion, hallowed and hallowing.

If the Cadurcis family were now not absolutely forgotten at

Cherbury, they were at least only occasionally remembered. These last three years so completely harmonised with the life of Venetia before their arrival, that, taking a general view of her existence, their residence at the abbey figured only as an episode in her career; active indeed and stirring, and one that had left some impressions not easily discarded; but, on the whole, mellowed by the magic of time, Venetia looked back to her youthful friendship as an event that was only an exception in her lot, and she viewed herself as a being born and bred up in a seclusion which she was never to quit, with no aspirations beyond the little world in which she moved, and where she was to die in peace, as she had lived in purity.

One Sunday, the conversation after dinner fell upon Lord Cadurcis. Doctor Masham had recently met a young Etonian, and had made some inquiries about their friend of old days. The information he had obtained was not very satisfactory. It seemed that Cadurcis was a more popular boy with his companions than his tutors; he had been rather unruly, and had only escaped expulsion by the influence of his guardian, who was not only a great noble, but a powerful minister.

This conversation recalled old times. They talked over the arrival of Mrs. Cadurcis at the abbey, her strange character, her untimely end. Lady Annabel expressed her conviction of the natural excellence of Plantagenet's disposition, and her regret of the many disadvantages under which he laboured; it gratified Venetia to listen to his praise.

"He has quite forgotten us, mamma," said Venetia.

"My love, he was very young when he quitted us," replied Lady Annabel; and you must remember the influence of a change of life at so tender an age. He lives now in a busy world."

"I wish that he had not forgotten to write to us sometimes," said Venetia.

"Writing a letter is a great achievement for a schoolboy," said the Doctor; "it is a duty which even grown-up persons too often forget to fulfil, and when postponed, it is generally deferred for ever. However, I agree with Lady Annabel, Cadurcis was a fine fellow, and had he been properly brought up, I cannot help thinking, might have turned out something."

"Poor Plantagenet;" said Venetia, "how I pity him. His was a terrible lot—to lose both his parents! Whatever were the errors of Mrs. Carducis, she was his mother, and in spite of every mortification he clung to her. Ah! I shall never forget when Pauncefort met him coming out of her room the night before the burial, when he said, with streaming eyes, 'I only had one friend in the

world, and now she is gone.' I could not love Mrs. Cadurcis, and yet, when I heard of these words, I cried as much as he."

"Poor fellow!" said the Doctor, filling his glass.

"If there be any person in the world whom I pity," said Venetia, "'tis an orphan. Oh! what should I be without mamma? And Plantagenet, poor Plantagenet! he has no mother, no father." Venetia added with a faltering voice: "I can sympathise with him in some degree, I, I, I know, I feel the misfortune, the misery,—" her face became crimson, yet she could not restrain the irresistible words,—"the misery of never having known a father," she added.

There was a dead pause, a most solemn silence. In vain Venetia struggled to look calm and unconcerned; every instant she felt the blood mantling in her cheek with a more lively and spreading agitation. She dared not look up; it was not possible to utter a word to turn the conversation. She felt utterly confounded, and absolutely mute. At length, Lady Annabel spoke. Her tone was severe and choking, very different to her usual silvery voice.

"I am sorry that my daughter should feel so keenly the want of a parent's love," said her ladyship.

What would not Venetia have given for the power of speech? but it seemed to have deserted her for ever. There she sat mute and motionless, with her eyes fixed on the table, and with a burning cheek, as if she were conscious of having committed some act of shame, as if she had been detected in some base and degrading deed. Yet, what had she done? A daughter had delicately alluded to her grief at the loss of a parent, and expressed her keen sense of the deprivation.

It was an autumnal afternoon: Doctor Masham looked at the sky, and after a long pause, made an observation about the weather, and then requested permission to order his horses, as the evening came on apace, and he had some distance to ride. Lady Annabel rose; the Doctor, with a countenance unusually serious, offered her his arm; and Venetia followed them like a criminal. In a few minutes the horses appeared; Lady Annabel bid adieu to her friend in her usual kind tone, and with her usual sweet smile; and then, without noticing Venetia, instantly retired to her own chamber.

And this was her mother—her mother who never before quitted her for an instant without some sign and symbol of affection, some playful word of love, a winning smile, a passing embrace, that seemed to acknowledge that the pang of even momentary separation could only be alleviated by this graceful homage to the heart. What had she done? Venetia was about to follow Lady Annabel, but she checked herself. Agony at having offended her mother,

and for the first time, was blended with a strange curiosity as to the cause, and some hesitating indignation at her treatment. Venetia remained anxiously awaiting the return of Lady Annabel; but her ladyship did not reappear. Every instant, the astonishment and the grief of Venetia increased. It was the first domestic difference that had occurred between them. It shocked her very much. She thought of Plantagenet and Mrs. Cadureis. There was a mortifying resemblance, however slight, between the respective situations of the two families. Venetia, too, had quarrelled with her mother; that mother who, for fourteen years, had only looked upon her with fondness and joy; who had been ever kind, without being ever weak, and had rendered her child happy by making her good; that mother whose beneficent wisdom had transformed duty into delight; that superior, yet gentle being, so indulgent yet so just, so gifted yet so condescending, who dedicated all her knowledge, and time, and care, and intellect to her daughter.

Venetia threw herself upon a couch and wept. They were the first tears of unmixed pain that she had ever shed. It was said by the household of Venetia when a child, that she had never cried; not a single tear had ever sullied that sunny face. Surrounded by scenes of innocence, and images of happiness and content, Venetia smiled on a world that smiled on her, the radiant heroine of a golden age. She had, indeed, wept over the sorrows and the departure of Cadureis; but those were soft showers of sympathy and affection sent from a warm heart, like drops from a summer sky. But now this grief was agony: her brow throbbed, her hand was clenched, her heart beat with tumultuous palpitation; the streaming torrent came scalding down her cheek like fire rather than tears, and instead of assuaging her emotion, seemed, on the contrary, to increase its fierce and fervid power.

The sun had set, the red autumnal twilight had died away, the shadows of night were brooding over the halls of Cherbury. The moan of the rising wind might be distinctly heard, and ever and anon the branches of neighbouring trees swung with a sudden yet melancholy sound against the windows of the apartment, of which the curtains had remained undrawn. Venetia looked up; the room would have been in perfect darkness but for a glimmer which just indicated the site of the expiring fire, and an uncertain light, or rather modified darkness, that seemed the sky. Alone and desolate! Alone and desolate and unhappy! Alone and desolate and unhappy, and for the first time! Was it a sigh, or a groan, that issued from the stifling heart of Venetia Herbert? That child of innocence, that bright emanation of love and beauty, that airy creature of grace and gentleness, who had never said an unkind

word or done an unkind thing in her whole career, but had glanced and glided through existence, scattering happiness and joy, and receiving the pleasure which she herself imparted, how overwhelming was her first struggle with that dark stranger—Sorrow!

Some one entered the room; it was Mistress Pauncefort. She held a taper in her hand, and came tripping gingerly in, with a new cap streaming with ribands, and scarcely, as it were, condescending to execute the mission with which she was intrusted, which was no greater than fetching her lady's reticule. She glanced at the table, but it was not there; she turned up her nose at a chair or two, which she even condescended to propel a little with a saucy foot, as if the reticule might be hid under the hanging drapery, and then, unable to find the object of her search, Mistress Pauncefort settled herself before the glass, elevating the taper above her head, that she might observe what indeed she had been examining the whole day, the effect of her new cap. With a complacent simper, Mistress Pauncefort then turned from pleasure to business, and, approaching the couch, gave a faint shriek, half genuine, half affected, as she recognised the recumbent form of her young mistress. "Well to be sure," exclaimed Mistress Pauncefort, "was the like ever seen! Miss Venetia, as I live! La! Miss Venetia, what can be the matter? I declare I am all of a palpitation."

Venetia, affecting composure, said she was rather unwell; that she had a headache, and, rising, murmured that she would go to bed. "A headache!" exclaimed Mistress Pauncefort, "I hope no worse, for there is my lady, and she is as out of sorts as possible. She has a headache too; and when I shut the door just now, I am sure as quiet as a lamb, she told me not to make so much noise when I left the room. 'Noise!' says I; 'why really, my lady, I don't pretend to be a spirit; but if it comes to noise—' 'Never answer me, Pauncefort' says my lady. 'No, my lady,' says I, 'I never do, and, I am sure, when I have a headache myself, I don't like to be answered.' But, to be sure, if you have a headache, and my lady has a headache too. I only hope we have not got the epidemic. I now, Miss Venetia, that your eyes are as red as if you had been running against the wind. Well, to be sure, if you have not been crying! I must go and tell my lady immediately."

"Light me to my room," said Venetia; "I will not disturb my mother, as she is unwell."

Venetia rose, and Mistress Pauncefort followed her to her chamber, and lit her candles. Venetia desired her not to remain; and when she had quitted the chamber, Venetia threw herself in her chair and sighed.

To sleep—it was impossible; it seemed to Venetia that she could

never rest again. She wept no more, but her distress was very great. She felt it impossible to exist through the night without being reconciled to her mother; but she refrained from going to her room, from the fear of again meeting her troublesome attendant. She resolved, therefore, to wait until she heard Mistress Pauncefort retire for the night, and she listened with restless anxiety for the sign of her departure in the sound of her footsteps along the vestibule, on which the doors of Lady Annabel's and her daughter's apartments opened.

An hour elapsed, and at length the sound was heard. Convinced that Pauncefort had now quitted her mother for the night, Venetia ventured forth, and stopping before the door of her mother's room, she knocked gently. There was no reply, and in a few minutes Venetia knocked again, and rather louder. Still no answer. "Mamma," said Venetia in a faltering tone, but no sound replied. Venetia then tried the door, and found it fastened. Then she gave up the effort in despair, and retreating to her own chamber, she threw herself on her bed, and wept bitterly.

Some time elapsed before she looked up again; the candles were flaring in their sockets. It was a wild windy night; Venetia rose, and withdrew the curtain of her window. The black clouds were scudding along the sky, revealing in their occasional but transient rifts, some glimpses of the moon that seemed unusually bright; or of a star that trembled with supernatural brilliancy. She stood a while gazing on the outward scene that harmonized with her own internal agitation: her grief was like the storm, her love like the light of that bright moon and star. There came over her a desire to see her mother, which she felt irresistible; she was resolved that no difficulty, no impediment, should prevent her instantly from throwing herself on her bosom. It seemed to her that her brain would burn, that this awful night could never end without such an interview. She opened her door, went forth again into the vestibule, and approached with a nervous but desperate step her mother's chamber. To her astonishment the door was ajar, but there was a light within. With trembling step and downcast eyes, Venetia entered the chamber, scarcely daring to advance, or to look up.

"Mother," she said, but no one answered; she heard the tick of the clock; it was the only sound. "Mother," she repeated, and she dared to look up, but the bed was empty. There was no mother. Lady Annabel was not in the room. Following an irresistible impulse, Venetia knelt by the side of her mother's bed and prayed. She addressed in audible and agitated tones, that Almighty and Beneficent Being of whom she was so faithful and pure a follower. With sanctified simplicity, she communicated to her Creator and

her Saviour all her distress, all her sorrow, all the agony of her perplexed and wounded spirit. If she had sinned, she prayed for forgiveness, and declared in solitude, to one whom she could not deceive, how unintentional was the trespass; if she were only misapprehended, she supplicated for comfort and consolation; for support under the heaviest visitation she had yet experienced, the displeasure of that earthly parent whom she revered only second to her heavenly Father.

"For thou art my Father," said Venetia, "I have no other father but thee, O God! Forgive me, then, my heavenly parent, if in my wilfulness, if in my thoughtless and sinful blindness, I have sighed for a father on earth, as well as in heaven! Great have thy mercies been to me, O God! in a mother's love. Turn, then, again to me the heart of that mother whom I have offended! Let her look upon her child as before; let her continue to me a double parent, and let me pay to her the duty and the devotion that might otherwise have been divided!"

"Amen!" said a sweet and solemn voice, and Venetia was clasped in her mother's arms.

CHAPTER III.

If the love of Lady Annabel for her child were capable of increase, it might have been believed that it absolutely became more profound and ardent after that short-lived but painful estrangement, which we have related in the last chapter. With all Lady Annabel's fascinating qualities and noble virtues, a fine observer of human nature enjoying opportunities of intimately studying her character, might have suspected that an occasion only were wanted to display or develop in that lady's conduct no trifling evidence of a haughty, proud, and even inexorable spirit. Circumstanced as she was at Cherbury, with no one capable or desirous of disputing her will, the more gracious and exalted qualities of her nature were alone apparent. Entertaining a severe, even a sublime sense of the paramount claims of duty in all conditions and circumstances of life, her own conduct afforded an invariable and consistent example of her tenet; from those around her she required little, and that was cheerfully granted; while on the other hand, her more eminent situation alike multiplied her own obligations, and enabled her to fulfil them; she appeared, therefore, to pass her life in conferring happiness and in receiving gratitude. Strictly religious, of immaculate reputation, rigidly just, systematically charitable, dignified in her manners, yet more than courteous to her inferiors, and gifted

at the same time with great self-control and great decision, she was looked up to by all within her sphere, with a sentiment of affectionate veneration. Perhaps there was only one person within her little world who, both by disposition and relative situation, was qualified in any way to question her undoubted sway, or to cross by independence of opinion the tenour of the discipline she had established, and this was her child. Venetia, with one of the most affectionate and benevolent natures in the world, was gifted with a shrewd inquiring mind, and a restless imagination. She was capable of forming her own opinions, and had both reason and feeling at command to gauge their worth. But to gain an influence over this child had been the sole object of Lady Annabel's life, and she had hitherto met that success which usually awaits in this world the strong purpose of a determined spirit. Lady Annabel herself was far too acute a person not to have detected early in life the talents of her child, and she was proud of them. She had cultivated them with exemplary devotion, and with admirable profit. But Lady Annabel had not less discovered that, in the ardent and susceptible temperament of Venetia, means were offered by which the heart might be trained not only to cope with but overpower the intellect. With great powers of pleasing, beauty, accomplishments, a sweet voice, a soft manner, a sympathetic heart, Lady Annabel was qualified to charm the world; she had contrived to fascinate her daughter. She had inspired Venetia with the most romantic attachment for her: such as rather subsists between two female friends of the same age and hearts, than between individuals in the relative situations which they bore to each other. Yet while Venetia thus loved her mother, she could not but also respect and revere the superior being whose knowledge was her guide on all subjects, and whose various accomplishments deprived her secluded education of all its disadvantages; and when she felt that one so gifted had devoted her life to the benefit of her child, and that this beautiful and peerless lady had no other ambition but to be her guardian and attendant spirit; gratitude, fervent and profound, mingled with admiring reverence and passionate affection, and together formed a spell that encircled the mind of Venetia with talismanic sway.

Under the despotic influence of these enchanted feelings, Venetia was fast growing into womanhood, without a single cloud having ever disturbed or sullied the pure and splendid heaven of her domestic life. Suddenly the horizon had become clouded, a storm had gathered and burst, and an eclipse could scarcely have occasioned more terror to the untutored roamer of the wilderness, than this unexpected catastrophe to one so inexperienced in the power of the passions as our heroine. Her heaven was again serene;

but such was the effect of this ebullition on her character, so keen was her dread of again encountering the agony of another misunderstanding with her mother, that she recoiled with trembling from that subject which had so often and so deeply engaged her secret thoughts; and the idea of her father, associated as it now was with pain, mortification, and misery, never rose to her imagination but instantly to be shunned as some unhallowed image, of which the bitter contemplation was fraught with not less disastrous consequences than the denounced idolatry of the holy people.

Whatever, therefore, might be the secret reasons which impelled Lady Annabel to shroud the memory of the lost parent of her child in such inviolate gloom, it is certain that the hitherto restless though concealed curiosity of Venetia upon the subject, the rash demonstration to which it led, and the consequence of her boldness, instead of threatening to destroy in an instant the deep and matured system of her mother, had, on the whole, greatly contributed to the fulfilment of the very purpose for which Lady Annabel had so long laboured. That lady spared no pains in following up the advantage which her acuteness and knowledge of her daughter's character assured her that she had secured. She hovered round her child more like an enamoured lover than a fond mother; she hung upon her looks, she read her thoughts, she anticipated every want and wish; her dulcet tones seemed even sweeter than before; her soft and elegant manners even more tender and refined. Though even in her childhood Lady Annabel had rather guided than commanded Venetia; now she rather consulted than guided her. She seized advantage of the advanced character and mature appearance of Venetia to treat her as a woman rather than a child, and as a friend rather than a daughter. Venetia yielded herself up to this flattering and fascinating condescension. Her love for her mother amounted to passion; she had no other earthly object or desire but to pass her entire life in her sole and sweet society; she could conceive no sympathy deeper or more delightful; the only unhappiness she had ever known had been occasioned by a moment trenching upon its exclusive privilege; Venetia could not picture to herself that such a pure and entrancing existence could ever experience a change.

And this mother, this devoted yet mysterious mother, jealous of her child's regret for a father that she had lost, and whom she had never known! shall we ever penetrate the secret of her heart?

CHAPTER IV.

It was in the enjoyment of these exquisite feelings that a year, and more than another year, elapsed at our lone hall of Cherbury. Happiness and content seemed at least the blessed destiny of the Herberts. Venetia grew in years, and grace, and loveliness; each day apparently more her mother's joy, and each day bound to that mother by, if possible, more ardent love. She had never again experienced those uneasy thoughts which at times had haunted her from her infancy; separated from her mother, indeed, scarcely for an hour together, she had no time to muse. Her studies each day becoming more various and interesting, and pursued with so gifted and charming a companion, entirely engrossed her; even the exercise that was her relaxation was participated by Lady Annabel; and the mother and daughter, bounding together on their steeds, were fanned by the same breeze, and freshened by the same graceful and healthy exertion.

One day the post, that seldom arrived at Cherbury, brought a letter to Lady Annabel, the perusal of which evidently greatly agitated her. Her countenance changed as her eye glanced over the pages; her hand trembled as she held it. But she made no remark; and succeeded in subduing her emotion so quickly, that Venetia, although she watched her mother with anxiety, did not feel justified in interfering with inquiring sympathy. But while Lady Annabel resumed her usual calm demeanour, she relapsed into unaccustomed silence, and, soon rising from the breakfast table, moved to the window, and continued apparently gazing on the garden, with her face averted from Venetia for some time. At length she turned to her, and said, "I think, Venetia, of calling on the Doctor to-day; there is business on which I wish to consult him, but I will not trouble you, dearest, to accompany me. I must take the carriage, and it is a long and tiring drive."

There was a tone of decision even in the slightest observations of Lady Annabel, which, however sweet might be the voice in which they were uttered, scarcely encouraged their propriety to be canvassed. Now Venetia was far from desirous of being separated from her mother this morning. It was not a vain and idle curiosity prompted by the receipt of the letter and its consequent effects, both in the emotion of her mother and the visit which it had rendered necessary, that swayed her breast. The native dignity of a well-disciplined mind exempted Venetia from such feminine weakness. But some consideration might be due to the quick sympathy of an affectionate spirit that had witnessed, with corre-

sponding feeling, the disturbance of the being to whom she was devoted. Why this occasional and painful mystery that ever and anon clouded the heaven of their love, and flung a frigid shadow over the path of a sunshiny life? Why was not Venetia to share the sorrow or the care of her only friend, as well as participate in her joy and her content? There were other claims, too, to this confidence, besides those of the heart. Lady Annabel was not merely her only friend, she was her parent, her only parent, almost, for aught she had ever heard or learnt, her only relative. For her mother's family, though she was aware of their existence by the freedom with which Lady Annabel ever mentioned them, and though Venetia was conscious that an occasional correspondence was maintained between them and Cherbury, occupied no station in Venetia's heart, scarcely in her memory. That noble family were nullities to her; far distant, apparently estranged from her hearth, except in form, she had never seen them; they were associated in her recollection with none of the sweet ties of kindred. Her grandfather was dead without her ever having received his blessing; his successor, her uncle, was an ambassador, long absent from his country; her only aunt married to a soldier, and established at a foreign station. Venetia envied Dr. Masham the confidence which was extended to him; it seemed to her, even leaving out of sight the intimate feelings that subsisted between her and her mother, that the claims of blood to this confidence were at least as strong as those of friendship. But Venetia stifled their emotions; she parted from her mother with a kind, yet somewhat mournful, expression. Lady Annabel might have read a slight sentiment of affectionate reproach in the demeanour of her daughter when she bade her farewell. Whatever might be the consciousness of the mother, she was successful in concealing her impression. Very kind, but calm and inscrutable, Lady Annabel, having given directions for postponing the dinner-hour, embraced her child and entered the chariot.

Venetia, from the terrace, watched her mother's progress through the park. After gazing for some minutes, a tear stole down her cheek. She started, as if surprised at her own emotion. And now the carriage was out of sight, and Venetia would have recurred to some of those resources which were ever at hand for the employment or amusement of her secluded life. But the favourite volume ceased to interest this morning, and almost fell from her hand. She tried her spinet, but her ear seemed to have lost its music; she looked at her easel, but the cunning had fled from her touch.

Restless and disquieted, she knew not why, Venetia went forth again into the garden. All nature smiled around her; the flitting birds were throwing their soft shadows over the sunny lawns, and

rustling amid the blossoms of the variegated groves. The golden wreaths of the laburnum and the silver knots of the chestnut streamed and glittered around ; the bees were as busy as the birds, and the whole scene was suffused and penetrated with brilliancy and odour. It still was spring, and yet the gorgeous approach of summer, like the advancing procession of some triumphant king, might almost be detected amid the lingering freshness of the year ; a lively and yet magnificent period, blending, as it were, Attic grace with Roman splendour ; a time when hope and fruition for once meet, when existence is most full of delight, alike delicate and voluptuous, and when the human frame is most sensible to the gaiety and grandeur of nature.

And why was not the spirit of the beautiful and innocent Venetia as bright as the surrounding scene ? There are moods of mind that baffle analysis, that arise from a mysterious sympathy we cannot penetrate. At this moment the idea of her father irresistibly recurred to the imagination of Venetia. She could not withstand the conviction that the receipt of the mysterious letter and her mother's agitation were by some inexplicable connection linked with that forbidden subject. Strange incidents of her life flitted across her memory : her mother weeping on the day they visited Marringhurst—the mysterious chambers—the nocturnal visit of Lady Annabel that Cadureis had witnessed—her unexpected absence from her apartment, when Venetia in her despair had visited her, some months ago. What was the secret that enveloped her existence ? Alone, which was unusual—dispirited, she knew not why—and brooding over thoughts which haunted her like evil spirits, Venetia at length yielded to a degree of nervous excitement which amazed her. She looked up to the uninhabited wing of the mansion with an almost fierce desire to penetrate its mysteries. It seemed to her that a strange voice came whispering on the breeze, urging her to the fulfilment of a mystical mission. With a vague, yet wild purpose, she entered the house, and took her way to her mother's chamber. Mistress Pouncefort was there. Venetia endeavoured to assume her accustomed serenity. The waiting-woman bustled about, arranging the toilet-table, which had been for a moment discomposed, putting away a cap, folding up a shawl, and indulging in a multitude of inane observations which little harmonised with the high-strung tension of Venetia's mind. Mistress Pouncefort opened a casket with a spring lock, in which she placed some trinkets of her mistress. Venetia stood by her in silence ; her eye, vacant and wandering, beheld the interior of the casket. There must have been something in it, the sight of which greatly agitated her, for Venetia turned pale, and in a moment left the chamber and retired to her own room.

She locked her door, threw herself in a chair; almost gasping for breath, she covered her face with her hands. It was some minutes before she recovered comparative composure; she rose and looked in the mirror; her face was quite white, but her eyes glittering with excitement. She walked up and down her room with a troubled step, and a scarlet flush alternately returned to and retired from her changing cheek. Then she leaned against a cabinet in thought. She was disturbed from her musings by the sound of Pauncefort's step along the vestibule, as she quitted her mother's chamber. In a few minutes Venetia herself stepped forth into the vestibule and listened. All was silent. The golden morning had summoned the whole household to its enjoyment. Not a voice, not a domestic sound, broke the complete stillness. Venetia again repaired to the apartment of Lady Annabel. Her step was light, but agitated; it seemed that she scarcely dared to breathe. She opened the door, rushed to the cabinet, pressed the spring lock, caught at something that it contained, and hurried again to her own chamber.

And what is this prize that the trembling Venetia holds almost convulsively in her grasp, apparently without daring even to examine it? Is this the serene and light-hearted girl, whose face was like the cloudless splendour of a sunny day? Why is she so pallid and perturbed? What strong impulse fills her frame? She clutches in her hand a key!

On that tempestuous night of passionate sorrow which succeeded the first misunderstanding between Venetia and her mother, when the voice of Lady Annabel had suddenly blended with that of her kneeling child, and had ratified with her devotional concurrence her wailing supplications; even at the moment when Venetia, in a rapture of love and duty, felt herself pressed to her mother's reconciled heart, it had not escaped her that Lady Annabel held in her hand a key; and though the feelings which that night had so forcibly developed, and which the subsequent conduct of Lady Annabel had so carefully and skilfully cherished, had impelled Venetia to banish and erase from her thought and memory all the associations which that spectacle, however slight, was calculated to awaken, still, in her present mood, the unexpected vision of the same instrument, identical she could not doubt, had triumphed in an instant over all the long discipline of her mind and conduct, in an instant had baffled and dispersed her self-control, and been hailed as the providential means by which she might at length penetrate that mystery which she now felt no longer supportable.

The clock of the belfry of Cherbury at this moment struck, and Venetia instantly sprang from her seat. It reminded her of the

preciousness of the present morning. Her mother was indeed absent, but her mother would return. Before that event a great fulfilment was to occur. Venetia, still grasping the key, as if it were the talisman of her existence, looked up to Heaven as if she required for her allotted task an immediate and special protection; her lips seemed to move, and then she again quitted her apartment. As she passed through an oriel in her way towards the gallery, she observed Pouncefort in the avenue of the park, moving in the direction of the keeper's lodge. This emboldened her. With a hurried step she advanced along the gallery, and at length stood before the long-sealed door that had so often excited her strange curiosity. Once she looked around; but no one was near, not a sound was heard. With a faltering hand she touched the lock; but her powers deserted her: for a minute she believed that the key, after all, would not solve the mystery. And yet the difficulty arose only from her own agitation. She rallied her courage; once more she made the trial; the key fitted with completeness, and the lock opened with ease, and Venetia found herself in a small and scantily-furnished antechamber. Closing the door with noiseless care, Venetia stood trembling in the mysterious chamber, where apparently there was nothing to excite wonder. The chamber into which the ante-room opened was still closed, and it was some minutes before the adventurous daughter of Lady Annabel could summon courage for the enterprise which awaited her.

The door yielded without an effort. Venetia stepped into a spacious and lofty chamber. For a moment she paused almost upon the threshold, and looked around her with a vague and misty vision. Anon she distinguished something of the character of the apartment. In the recess of a large oriel window that looked upon the park, and of which the blinds were nearly drawn, was an old-fashioned yet sumptuous toilet-table of considerable size, arranged as if for use. Opposite this window, in a corresponding recess, was what might be deemed a bridal bed, its furniture being of white satin richly embroidered; the curtains half closed; and suspended from the canopy was a wreath of roses that had once emulated, or rather excelled, the lustrous purity of the hangings, but now were wan and withered. The centre of the inlaid and polished floor of the apartment was covered with a Tournay carpet of brilliant yet tasteful decoration. An old cabinet of fanciful workmanship, some chairs of ebony, and some girandoles of silver completed the furniture of the room, save that at its extreme end, exactly opposite to the door by which Venetia entered, covered with a curtain of green silk, was what she concluded must be a picture.

An awful stillness pervaded the apartment: Venetia herself, with a face paler even than the hangings of the mysterious bed, stood

motionless with suppressed breath, gazing on the distant curtain with a painful glance of agitated fascination. At length, summoning her energies as if for the achievement of some terrible yet inevitable enterprise, she crossed the room, and averting her face, and closing her eyes in a paroxysm of nervous excitement, she stretched forth her arm, and with a rapid motion withdrew the curtain. The harsh sound of the brass rings drawn quickly over the rod, the only noise that had yet met her ear in this mystical chamber, made her start and tremble. She looked up—she beheld, in a broad and massy frame, the full-length portrait of a man.

A man in the very spring of sunny youth, and of radiant beauty. Above the middle height, yet with a form that displayed exquisite grace, he was habited in a green tunic that developed his figure to advantage, and became the scene in which he was placed—a park, with a castle in the distance; while a groom at hand held a noble steed, that seemed impatient for the chase. The countenance of its intended rider met fully the gaze of the spectator. It was a countenance of singular loveliness and power. The lips and the moulding of the chin resembled the eager and impassioned tenderness of the shape of Antinous; but instead of the effeminate sullenness of the eye, and the narrow smoothness of the forehead, shone an expression of profound and piercing thought. On each side of the clear and open brow descended, even to the shoulders, the clustering locks of golden hair; while the eyes, large and yet deep, beamed with a spiritual energy, and shone like two wells of crystalline water that reflect the all-beholding heavens.

Now when Venetia Herbert beheld this countenance a change came over her. It seemed that when her eyes met the eyes of the portrait, some mutual interchange of sympathy occurred between them. She freed herself in an instant from the apprehension and timidity that before oppressed her. Whatever might ensue, a vague conviction of having achieved a great object pervaded, as it were, her being. Some great end, vast though indefinite, had been fulfilled. Abstract and fearless, she gazed upon the dazzling visage with a prophetic heart. Her soul was in a tumult, oppressed with thick-coming fancies too big for words, panting for expression. There was a word which must be spoken: it trembled on her convulsive lip, and would not sound. She looked around her with an eye glittering with unnatural fire, as if to supplicate some invisible and hovering spirit to her rescue, or that some floating and angelic chorus might warble the thrilling word whose expression seemed absolutely necessary to her existence. Her cheek is flushed, her eye wild and tremulous, the broad blue veins of her immaculate brow quivering and distended; her waving hair falls back over her forehead, and rustles like a wood before

the storm. She seems a priestess in the convulsive throes of inspiration, and about to breathe the oracle.

The picture, as we have mentioned, was hung in a broad and massy frame. In the centre of its base was worked an escutcheon, and beneath the shield this inscription,—

MARMION HERBERT, ÆT. XX.

Yet there needed not these letters to guide the agitated spirit of Venetia, for, before her eye had reached them, the word was spoken; and falling on her knees before the portrait, the daughter of Lady Annabel had exclaimed “My father!”

CHAPTER V.

THE daughter still kneels before the form of the father, of whom she had heard for the first time in her life. He is at length discovered. It was, then, an irresistible destiny that, after the wild musings and baffled aspirations of so many years, had guided her to this chamber. She is the child of Marmion Herbert; she beholds her lost parent. That being of supernatural beauty, on whom she gazes with a look of blended reverence and love, is her father. What a revelation! Its reality exceeded the wildest dreams of her romance; her brightest visions of grace and loveliness and genius seemed personified in this form; the form of one to whom she was bound by the strongest of all earthly ties—of one on whose heart she had a claim second only to that of the being by whose lips his name was never mentioned. Was he, then, no more? Ah! could she doubt that bitterest calamity? Ah! was it, was it any longer a marvel, that one who had lived in the light of those seraphic eyes, and had watched them until their terrestrial splendour had been for ever extinguished, should shrink from the converse that could remind her of the catastrophe of all her earthly hopes! This chamber, then, was the temple of her mother's woe—the tomb of her baffled affections and bleeding heart. No wonder that Lady Annabel, the desolate Lady Annabel, that almost the same spring must have witnessed the most favoured and the most disconsolate of women, should have fled from the world that had awarded her at the same time a lot so dazzling and so full of despair. Venetia felt that the existence of her mother's child, her own fragile being, could have been that mother's sole link to life. The heart of the young widow of Marmion Herbert must have broken but for Venetia; and the consciousness of that remaining tie, and the duties that it involved could alone have sustained the

victim under a lot of such unparalleled bitterness. The tears streamed down her cheek as she thought of her mother's misery, and her mother's gentle love; the misery that she had been so cautious her child should never share; the vigilant affection that, with all her own hopes blighted, had still laboured to compensate to her child for a deprivation, the fulness of which Venetia could only now comprehend.

When, where, why—did he die? Oh! that she might talk of him to her mother for ever! It seemed that life might pass away in listening to his praises. Marmion Herbert!—and who was Marmion Herbert? Young as he was, command and genius, the pride of noble passions, all the glory of a creative mind, seemed stamped upon his brow. With all his marvellous beauty, he seemed a being born for greatness. Dead—in the very burst of his spring, a spring so sweet and splendid—could he be dead? Why, then, was he ever born? It seemed to her that he could not be dead; there was an animated look about the form, that seemed as if it could not die without leaving mankind a prodigal legacy of fame.

Venetia turned and looked upon her parents' bridal bed. Now that she had discovered her father's portrait, every article in the room interested her, for her imagination connected everything with him. She touched the wreath of withered roses, and one instantly broke away from the circle, and fell; she knelt down, and gathered up the scattered leaves, and placed them in her bosom. She approached the table in the oriel: in its centre was a volume, on which reposed a dagger of curious workmanship; the volume bound in velvet, and the word "ANNABEL" embroidered upon it in gold. Venetia unclasped it. The volume was MS.; in a fly-leaf were written these words:—

"TO THE LADY OF MY LOVE, FROM HER MARMION HERBERT."

With a fluttering heart, yet sparkling eye, Venetia sank into a chair, which was placed before the table, with all her soul concentrated in the contents of this volume. Leaning on her right hand, which shaded her agitated brow, she turned a page of the volume with a trembling hand. It contained a sonnet, delineating the feelings of a lover at the first sight of his beloved,—a being to him yet unknown. Venetia perused with breathless interest the graceful and passionate picture of her mother's beauty. A series of similar compositions detailed the history of the poet's heart, and all the thrilling adventures of his enchanted life. Not an incident, not a word, not a glance, in that spell-bound prime of existence, that was not commemorated by his lyre in strains as sweet and as witching! Now he poured forth his passion; now his doubts; now his hopes; now came the glowing hour when he was first assured

of his felicity ; the next page celebrated her visit to the castle of his fathers ; and another led her to the altar.

With a flushed cheek and an excited eye, Venetia had rapidly pored over these ardent annals of the heart from whose blood she had sprung. She turns the page—she starts—the colour deserts her countenance—a mist glides over her vision—she clasps her hands with convulsive energy—she sinks back in her chair. In a few moments she extends one hand, as if fearful again to touch the book that had excited so much emotion—raises herself in her seat—looks around her with a vacant and perplexed gaze—apparently succeeds in collecting herself—and then seizes, with an eager grasp, the volume, and throwing herself on her knees before the chair—her long locks hanging on each side over a cheek crimson as the sunset—loses her whole soul in the lines which the next page reveals.

ON THE NIGHT OUR DAUGHTER WAS BORN.

I.

Within our heaven of love, the new-born star
We long devoutly watched, like shepherd kings,
Steals into light, and, floating from afar,
Methinks some bright transcendent seraph sings,
Waving with flashing light her radiant wings,
Immortal welcome to the stranger fair :
To us a child is born. With transport clings
The mother to the babe she sighed to bear ;
Of all our treasured loves the long-expected heir !

II.

My daughter ! can it be a daughter now
Shall greet my being with her infant smile ?
And shall I press that fair and taintless brow
With my fond lips, and tempt, with many a wile
Of playful love, those features to beguile
A parent with their mirth ? In the wild sea
Of this dark life, behold a little isle
Rises amid the waters, bright and free,
A haven for my hopes of fond security !

III.

And thou shalt bear a name my line has loved,
And their fair daughters owned for many an age,
Since first our fiery blood a wanderer roved,
And made in sunnier lands his pilgrimage,

Where proud defiance with the waters wage
 The sea-born city's walls ; the graceful towers
 Loved by the bard and honoured by the sage !
 My own VENETIA now shall gild our bowers,
 And with her spell enchain our life's enchanted hours !

IV.

Oh ! if the blessing of a father's heart
 Hath aught of sacred in its deep-breath'd prayer,
 Skilled to thy gentle being to impart,
 As thy bright form itself, a fate as fair ;
 On thee I breathe that blessing ! Let me share,
 O God ! her joys ; and if the dark behest
 Of woe resistless, and avoidless care,
 Hath not gone forth, oh ! spare this gentle guest,
 And wreak thy needful wrath on my resigned breast !

An hour elapsed, and Venetia did not move. Over and over again she conned the only address from the lips of her father that had ever reached her ear. A strange inspiration seconded the exertion of an exercised memory. The duty was fulfilled—the task completed. Then a sound was heard without. The thought that her mother had returned occurred to her ; she looked up, the big tears streaming down her face ; she listened, like a young hind just roused by the still-distant huntsman, quivering and wild ;—she listened, and she sprang up—replaced the volume—arranged the chair—cast one long, lingering, feverish glance at the portrait—skimmed through the room—hesitated one moment in the ante-chamber—opened, as all was silent, the no longer mysterious door—turned the noiseless lock—tripped lightly along the vestibule—glided into her mother's empty apartment—reposed the key that had opened so many wonders in the casket,—and then, having hurried to her own chamber, threw herself on her bed in a paroxysm of contending emotions, that left her no power of pondering over the strange discovery that had already given a new colour to her existence.

CHAPTER VI.

HER mother had not returned ; it was a false alarm ; but Venetia could not quit her bed. There she remained, repeating to herself her father's verses. Then one thought alone filled her being. Was he dead ? Was this fond father, who had breathed this fervent blessing over her birth, and invoked on his own head all the woe

and misfortunes of her destiny, was he, indeed, no more? How swiftly must the arrow have sped after he received the announcement that a child was given to him—

“Of all his treasured loves the long-expected heir!”

He could scarcely have embraced her ere the great Being, to whom he had offered his prayer, summoned him to his presence! Of that father she had not the slightest recollection; she had ascertained that she had reached Cherbury a child, even in arms, and she knew that her father had never lived under the roof. What an awful bereavement! Was it wonderful that her mother was inconsolable? Was it wonderful that she could not endure even his name to be mentioned in her presence—that not the slightest allusion to his existence could be tolerated by a wife who had been united to such a peerless being, only to behold him torn away from her embraces? Oh! could he, indeed, be dead! That inspired countenance that seemed immortal, had it in a moment been dimmed? and all the symmetry of that matchless form, had it indeed been long mouldering in the dust? Why should she doubt it? Ah! why, indeed? How could she doubt it? Why, ever and anon, amid the tumult of her excited mind, came there an unearthly whisper to her ear, mocking her with the belief that he still lived? But he was dead; he must be dead; and why did she live? Could she survive what she had seen and learnt this day? Did she wish to survive it? But her mother, her mother with all her sealed-up sorrows, had survived him. Why? For her sake; for her child; for “his own Venetia!” His own!

She clenched her feverish hand—her temples beat with violent palpitations—her brow was burning hot. Time flew on, and every minute Venetia was more sensible of the impossibility of rising to welcome her mother. That mother at length returned; Venetia could not again mistake the wheels of the returning carriage. Some minutes passed, and there was a knock at her door. With a choking voice Venetia bade them enter. It was Pauncefort.

“Well, Miss,” she exclaimed, “if you ain’t here, after all! I told my lady, ‘My lady,’ says I, ‘I am sure Miss Venetia must be in the park, for I saw her go out myself, and I have never seen her come home.’ And, after all, you are here. My lady has come home, you know, Miss, and has been inquiring for you several times.”

“Tell mamma that I am not very well,” said Venetia, in a low voice, “and that I have been obliged to lie down.”

“Not well, Miss,” exclaimed Pauncefort; “and what can be the matter with you? I am afraid you have walked too much; overdone it, I dare say; or, mayhap, you have caught cold; it is an easterly wind: for I was saying to John this morning, ‘John,’ says I, ‘if

Miss Venetia will walk about with only a handkerchief tied round her head, why—what can be expected?”

“I have only a headache, a very bad headache, Pauncefort; I wish to be quiet,” said Venetia.

Pauncefort left the room accordingly, and straightway proceeded to Lady Annabel, when she communicated the information that Miss Venetia was in the house, after all, though she had never seen her return, and that she was lying down because she had a very bad headache. Lady Annabel, of course, did not lose a moment in visiting her darling. She entered the room very softly, so softly that she was not heard; Venetia was lying on her bed, with her back to the door. Lady Annabel stood by her bedside for some moments unnoticed. At length Venetia heaved a deep sigh. Her mother then said in a very soft voice, “Are you in pain, darling?”

“Is that mamma?” said Venetia, turning with quickness.

“You are ill, dear,” said Lady Annabel, taking her hand. “Your hand is hot; you are feverish. How long has my Venetia felt ill?”

Venetia could not answer; she did nothing but sigh. Her strange manner excited her mother’s wonder. Lady Annabel sat by the bedside, still holding her daughter’s hand in hers, watching her with a glance of great anxiety.

“Answer me, my love,” she repeated in a voice of tenderness. “What do you feel?”

“My head, my head,” murmured Venetia.

Her mother pressed her own hand to her daughter’s brow; it was very hot. “Does that pain you?” inquired Lady Annabel; but Venetia did not reply; her look was wild and abstracted. Her mother gently withdrew her hand, and then summoned Pauncefort, with whom she communicated without permitting her to enter the room.

“Miss Herbert is very ill,” said Lady Annabel, pale, but in a firm tone. “I am alarmed about her. She appears to me to have a fever; send instantly to Southport for Mr. Hawkins; and let the messenger use and urge all possible expedition. Be in attendance in the vestibule, Pauncefort; I shall not quit her room, but she must be kept perfectly quiet.”

Lady Annabel then drew her chair to the bedside of her daughter, and bathed her temples at intervals with rose-water; but none of these attentions apparently attracted the notice of the sufferer. She was, it would seem, utterly unconscious of all that was occurring. She now lay with her face turned towards her mother, but did not exchange even looks with her. She was restless, and occasionally she sighed very deeply.

Once, by way of experiment, Lady Annabel again addressed her, but Venetia gave no answer. Then the mother concluded what, indeed, had before attracted her suspicion, that Venetia’s head was

affected. But then, what was this strange, this sudden attack, which appeared to have prostrated her daughter's faculties in an instant? A few hours back, and Lady Annabel had parted from Venetia in all the glow of health and beauty. The season was most genial; her exercise had doubtless been moderate; as for her general health, so complete was her constitution, and so calm the tenour of her life, that Venetia had scarcely experienced in her whole career a single hour of indisposition. It was an anxious period of suspense until the medical attendant arrived from Southport. Fortunately he was one in whom, from reputation, Lady Annabel was disposed to place great trust; and his matured years, his thoughtful manner, and acute inquiries, confirmed her favourable opinion of him. All that Mr. Hawkins could say, however, was, that Miss Herbert had a great deal of fever, but the cause was concealed, and the suddenness of the attack perplexed him. He administered one of the usual remedies; and after an hour had elapsed, and no favourable change occurring, he bled her. He quitted Cherbury, with the promise of returning late in the evening, having several patients whom he was obliged to visit.

The night drew on; the chamber was now quite closed, but Lady Annabel never quitted it. She sat reading, removed from her daughter, that her presence might not disturb her, for Venetia seemed inclined to sleep. Suddenly Venetia spoke; but she said only one word—"Father!"

Lady Annabel started—her book nearly fell from her hand—she grew very pale. Quite breathless, she listened, and again Venetia spoke, and again called upon her father. Now, with a great effort, Lady Annabel stole on tiptoe to the bedside of her daughter. Venetia was lying on her back, her eyes were closed, her lips still as it were quivering with the strange word they had dared to pronounce. Again her voice sounded; she chanted, in an unearthly voice, verses. The perspiration stood in large drops on the pallid forehead of the mother as she listened. Still Venetia proceeded; and Lady Annabel, throwing herself on her knees, held up her hands to Heaven in an agony of astonishment, terror, and devotion.

Now there was again silence; but her mother remained apparently buried in prayer. Again Venetia spoke; again she repeated the mysterious stanzas. With convulsive agony her mother listened to every fatal line that she unconsciously pronounced.

The secret was then discovered. Yes! Venetia must have penetrated the long-closed chamber; all the labours of years had in a moment been subverted; Venetia had discovered her parent, and the effects of the discovery might, perhaps, be her death. Then it was that Lady Annabel, in the torture of her mind, poured forth her supplications that the life or the heart of her child might never

be lost to her. "Grant, O merciful God!" she exclaimed, "that this sole hope of my being may be spared to me. Grant, if she be spared, that she may never desert her mother! And for him, of whom she has heard this day for the first time, let him be to her as if he were no more! May she never learn that he lives! May she never comprehend the secret agony of her mother's life! Save her, O God! save her from his fatal, his irresistible influence! May she remain pure and virtuous as she has yet lived! May she remain true to thee, and true to thy servant, who now bows before thee! Look down upon me at this moment with gracious mercy; turn to me my daughter's heart; and, if it be my dark doom to be in this world a widow, though a wife, add not to this bitterness that I shall prove a mother without a child!"

At this moment the surgeon returned. It was absolutely necessary that Lady Annabel should compose herself. She exerted all that strength of character for which she was remarkable. From this moment she resolved, if her life were the forfeit, not to quit for an instant the bedside of Venetia until she was declared out of danger; and feeling conscious that, if she once indulged her own feelings, she might herself soon be in a situation scarcely less hazardous than her daughter's, she controlled herself with a mighty effort. Calm as a statue, she received the medical attendant, who took the hand of the unconscious Venetia with apprehension too visibly impressed upon his grave countenance. As he took her hand, Venetia opened her eyes, stared at her mother and her attendant, and then immediately closed them.

"She has slept?" inquired Lady Annabel.

"No," said the surgeon, "no: this is not sleep; it is a feverish trance that brings her no refreshment." He took out his watch, and marked her pulse with great attention; then he placed his hand on her brow, and shook his head. "These beautiful curls must come off," he said. Lady Annabel glided to the table, and instantly brought the scissors, as if the delay of an instant might be fatal. The surgeon cut off those long golden locks. Venetia raised her hand to her head, and said, in a low voice, "They are for my father." Lady Annabel leant upon the surgeon's arm, and shook.

Now he led the mother to the window, and spoke in a very hushed tone.

"Is it possible that there is anything on your daughter's mind, Lady Annabel?" he inquired.

The agitated mother looked at the inquirer, and then at her daughter; and then for a moment she raised her hand to her eyes; then she replied, in a low but firm voice, "Yes."

"Your ladyship must judge whether you wish me to be acquainted with it," said Mr. Hawkins, very calmly.

"My daughter has suddenly become acquainted, Sir, with some family incidents of a very painful nature, and the knowledge of which I have hitherto spared her. They are events long past, and their consequences are now beyond all control."

"She knows, then, the worst?"

"Without her mind, I cannot answer that question," said Lady Annabel.

"It is my duty to tell you that Miss Herbert is in imminent danger; she has every appearance of a fever of the most malignant character. I cannot answer for her life."

"O God!" exclaimed Lady Annabel.

"Yet you must compose yourself, my dear lady. Her chance of recovery greatly depends upon the vigilance of her attendants. I shall bleed her again, and place leeches on her temples. There is inflammation on the brain. There are other remedies also not less powerful. We must not despair; we have no cause to despair until we find these fail. I shall not leave her again; and, for your satisfaction, not for my own, I shall call in additional advice,—the aid of a physician."

A messenger accordingly was instantly despatched for the physician, who resided at a town more distant than Southport; the very town, by-the-bye, where Morgana, the gipsy, was arrested. They contrived, with the aid of Pauncefort, to undress Venetia; and place her in her bed, for hitherto they had refrained from this exertion. At this moment the withered leaves of a white rose fell from Venetia's dress. A sofa-bed was then made for Lady Annabel, of which, however, she did not avail herself. The whole night she sat by her daughter's side, watching every movement of Venetia, refreshing her hot brow and parched lips, or arranging, at every opportunity, her disordered pillows. About an hour past midnight the surgeon retired to rest, for a few hours, in the apartment prepared for him, and Pauncefort, by the desire of her mistress, also withdrew: Lady Annabel was alone with her child, and with those agitated thoughts which the strange occurrences of the day were well calculated to excite.

CHAPTER VII.

EARLY in the morning the physician arrived at Cherbury. It remained for him only to approve of the remedies which had been pursued. No material change, however, had occurred in the state

of Venetia: she had not slept, and still she seemed unconscious of what was occurring. The gracious interposition of Nature seemed the only hope. When the medical men had withdrawn to consult in the terrace-room, Lady Annabel beckoned to Pouncefort, and led her to the window of Venetia's apartment, which she would not quit.

"Pouncefort," said Lady Annabel, "Venetia has been in her father's room."

"Oh! impossible, my lady," burst forth Mistress Pouncefort; but Lady Annabel placed her finger on her lip, and checked her. "There is no doubt of it, there can be no doubt of it, Pouncefort; she entered it yesterday; she must have passed the morning there, when you believed she was in the park."

"But, my lady," said Pouncefort, "how could it be? For I scarcely left your ladyship's room a second, and Miss Venetia, I am sure, never was near it. And the key, my lady, the key is in the casket. I saw it half an hour ago with my own eyes."

"There is no use arguing about it, Pouncefort," said Lady Annabel, with decision. "It is as I say. I fear great misfortunes are about to commence at Cherbury."

"Oh! my lady, don't think of such things," said Pouncefort, herself not a little alarmed. "What can happen?"

"I fear more than I know," said Lady Annabel; "but I do fear much. At present I can only think of her."

"Well! my lady," said poor Mistress Pouncefort, looking very bewildered, "only to think of such a thing! and after all the pains I have taken! I am sure I have not opened my lips on the subject these fifteen years; and the many questions I have been asked too! I am sure there is not a servant in the house—"

"Hush! hush!" said Lady Annabel, "I do not blame you, and therefore you need not defend yourself. Go, Pouncefort, I must be alone." Pouncefort withdrew, and Lady Annabel resumed her seat by her daughter's side.

On the fourth day of her attack the medical attendants observed a favourable change in their patient, and were not, of course, slow in communicating this joyful intelligence to her mother. The crisis had occurred and was past: Venetia had at length sunk into slumber. How different was her countenance from the still, yet settled features, they had before watched with such anxiety! She breathed lightly, the tension of the eyelids had disappeared, her mouth was slightly open. The physician and his colleague declared that immediate danger was past, and they counselled Lady Annabel to take repose. On condition that one of them should remain by the side of her daughter, the devoted yet miserable mother quitted,

for the first time, her child's apartment. Pauncefort followed her to her room.

"Oh! my lady," said Pauncefort, "I am so glad your la'ship is going to lie down a bit."

"I am not going to lie down, Pauncefort. Give me the key."

And Lady Annabel proceeded alone to the forbidden chamber,—that chamber which, after what has occurred, we may now enter with her, and where, with so much labour, she had created a room exactly imitative of their bridal apartment at her husband's castle. With a slow but resolved step she entered the apartment, and proceeding immediately to the table took up the book; it opened at the stanzas to Venetia. The pages had recently been bedewed with tears. Lady Annabel then looked at the bridal bed, and marked the missing rose in the garland: it was as she expected. She seated herself then in the chair opposite the portrait, on which she gazed with a glance rather stern than fond.

"Marmion," she exclaimed, "for fifteen years, a solitary votary, I have mourned over, in this temple of baffled affections, the inevitable past. The daughter of our love has found her way, perhaps by an irresistible destiny, to a spot sacred to my long-concealed sorrows. At length she knows her father. May she never know more! May she never learn that the being, whose pictured form has commanded her adoration, is unworthy of those glorious gifts that a gracious Creator has bestowed upon him! Marmion, you seem to smile upon me; you seem to exult in your triumph over the heart of your child. But there is a power in a mother's love that yet shall baffle you. Hitherto I have come here to deplore the past; hitherto I have come here to dwell upon the form that, in spite of all that has happened, I still was, perhaps, weak enough to love. Those feelings are past for ever. Yes! you would rob me of my child, you would tear from my heart the only consolation you have left me. But Venetia shall still be mine; and I, I am no longer yours. Our love, our still lingering love, has vanished. You have been my enemy, now I am yours. I gaze upon your portrait for the last time; and thus I prevent the magical fascination of that face again appealing to the sympathies of my child. Thus, and thus!"—She seized the ancient dagger that we have mentioned as lying on the volume, and, springing on the chair, she plunged it into the canvas; then, tearing with unflinching resolution the severed parts, she scattered the fragments over the chamber, shook into a thousand leaves the melancholy garland, tore up the volume of his enamoured Muse, and then quitting the chamber, and locking and double locking the

door, she descended the staircase, and proceeding to the great well of Cherbury, hurled into it the fatal key.

"Oh! my lady," said Mistress Pauncefort, as she met Lady Annabel returning in the vestibule, "Doctor Masham is here."

"Is he?" said Lady Annabel, as calm as usual. "I will see him before I lie down. Do not go into Venetia's room. She sleeps, and Mr. Hawkins has promised me to let me know when she wakes."

CHAPTER VIII.

As Lady Annabel entered the terrace-room, Doctor Masham came forward and grasped her hand.

"You have heard of our sorrow!" said her ladyship in a faint voice.

"But this instant," replied the Doctor, in a tone of great anxiety. "Immediate danger——"

"Is past. She sleeps," replied Lady Annabel.

"A most sudden and unaccountable attack," said the Doctor.

It is difficult to describe the contending emotions of the mother as her companion made this observation. At length she replied, "Sudden, certainly sudden: but not unaccountable. Oh! my friend," she added, after a moment's pause, "they will not be content until they have torn my daughter from me."

"They tear your daughter from you!" exclaimed Doctor Masham. "Who?"

"He, he," muttered Lady Annabel; her speech was incoherent, her manner very disturbed.

"My dear lady," said the Doctor, gazing on her with extreme anxiety, "you are yourself unwell."

Lady Annabel heaved a deep sigh; the Doctor bore her to a seat. "Shall I send for any one, anything?"

"No one, no one," quickly answered Lady Annabel. "With you, at least, there is no concealment necessary."

She leant back in her chair, the Doctor holding her hand, and standing by her side.

Still Lady Annabel continued sighing deeply: at length she looked up and said, "Does she love me? Do you think, after all, she loves me?"

"Venetia?" inquired the Doctor, in a low and doubtful voice, for he was greatly perplexed

"She has seen him; she loves him; she has forgotten her mother."

"My dear lady, you require rest," said Doctor Masham. "You are overcome with strange fancies. Whom has your daughter seen?"

"Marmion."

"Impossible! you forget he is——"

"Here also. He has spoken to her: she loves him: she will recover: she will fly to him—sooner let us both die!"

"Dear lady!"

"She knows everything. Fate has baffled me; we cannot struggle with fate. She is his child; she is like him; she is not like her mother. Oh! she hates me; I know she hates me."

"Hush! hush! hush!" said the Doctor, himself very agitated. "Venetia love you, only you. Why should she love any one else?"

"Who can help it? I loved him. I saw him: I loved him. His voice was music. He has spoken to her, and she yielded—she yielded in a moment. I stood by her bedside. She would not speak to me; she would not know me; she shrank from me. Her heart is with her father—only with him."

"Where did she see him? How?"

"His room—his picture. She knows all. I was away with you, and she entered his chamber."

"Ah!"

"Oh! Doctor, you have influence with her. Speak to her. Make her love me! Tell her she has no father; tell her he is dead."

"We will do that which is well and wise," replied Doctor Masham: "at present let us be calm; if you give way, her life may be the forfeit. Now is the moment for a mother's love."

"You are right. I should not have left her for an instant. I would not have her wake and find her mother not watching over her. But I was tempted. She slept; I left her for a moment; I went to destroy the spell. She cannot see him again. No one shall see him again. It was my weakness, the weakness of long years; and now I am its victim."

"Nay, nay, my sweet lady, all will be quite well. Be but calm; Venetia will recover."

"But will she love me? Oh! no, no, no. She will think only of him. She will not love her mother. She will yearn for her father now. She has seen him, and she will not rest until she is in his arms. She will desert me, I know it."

"And I know the contrary," said the Doctor, attempting to reassure her; "I will answer for Venetia's devotion to you. Indeed she has no thought but your happiness, and can love only

you. When there is a fitting time, I will speak to her; but now—now is the time for repose. And you must rest, you must indeed.”

“Rest! I cannot. I slumbered in the chair last night by her bedside, and a voice roused me. It was her own. She was speaking to her father. She told him how she loved him; how long, how much she thought of him; that she would join him when she was well, for she knew he was not dead; and, if he were dead, she would die also. She never mentioned me.”

“Nay! the light meaning of a delirious brain.”

“Truth—truth—bitter, inevitable truth. Oh! Doctor, I could bear all but this; but my child—my beautiful fond child, that made up for all my sorrows. My joy—my hope—my life! I knew it would be so; I knew he would have her heart. He said she never could be alienated from him; he said she never could be taught to hate him. I did not teach her to hate him. I said nothing. I deemed, fond, foolish mother, that the devotion of my life might bind her to me. But what is a mother’s love? I cannot contend with him. He gained the mother; he will gain the daughter too.”

“God will guard over you,” said Masham, with streaming eyes; “God will not desert a pious and virtuous woman.”

“I must go,” said Lady Annabel, attempting to rise, but the Doctor gently controlled her; “perhaps she is awake, and I am not at her side. She will not ask for me, she will ask for him; but I will be there; she will desert me, but she shall not say I ever deserted her.”

“She will never desert you,” said the Doctor; “my life on her pure heart. She has been a child of unbroken love and duty; still she will remain so. Her mind is for a moment overpowered by a marvellous discovery. She will recover, and be to you as she was before.

“We’ll tell her he is dead,” said Lady Annabel, eagerly. “You must tell her. She will believe you. I cannot speak to her of him; no, not to secure her heart; never—never—never can I speak to Venetia of her father.”

“I will speak,” replied the Doctor, “at the just time. Now let us think of her recovery. She is no longer in danger. We should be grateful, we should be glad.”

“Let us pray to God! Let us humble ourselves,” said Lady Annabel. “Let us beseech him not to desert this house. We have been faithful to him—we have struggled to be faithful to him. Let us supplicate him to favour and support us!”

“He will favour and support you,” said the Doctor, in a solemn

one. "He has upheld you in many trials; he will uphold you still."

"Ah! why did I love him! Why did I continue to love him! How weak, how foolish, how mad I have been! I have alone been the cause of all this misery. Yes, I have destroyed my child."

"She lives—she will live. Nay, nay, you must reassure yourself. Come, let me send for your servant, and for a moment repose. Nay! take my arm. All depends upon you. We have great cares now; let us not conjure up fantastic fears."

"I must go to my daughter's room. Perhaps by her side I might rest. Nowhere else. You will attend me to the door, my friend. Yes! it is something in this life to have a friend."

Lady Annabel took the arm of the good Masham. They stopped at her daughter's door.

"Rest here a moment," she said, as she entered the room without a sound. In a moment she returned. "She still sleeps," said the mother; "I shall remain with her, and you——?"

"I will not leave you," said the Doctor, "but think not of me—Nay! I will not leave you. I will remain under this roof. I have shared its serenity and joy; let me not avoid it in this time of trouble and tribulation."

CHAPTER IX.

VENETIA still slept: her mother alone in the chamber watched by her side. Some hours had elapsed since her interview with Dr. Masham; the medical attendant had departed for a few hours.

Suddenly Venetia moved, opened her eyes, and said in a faint voice, "Mamma!"

The blood rushed to Lady Annabel's heart. That single word afforded her the most exquisite happiness.

"I am here, dearest," she replied.

"Mamma, what is all this?" inquired Venetia.

"You have not been well, my own, but now you are much better."

"I thought I had been dreaming," replied Venetia, "and that all was not right; somebody, I thought, struck me on my head. But all is right now, because you are here, my dear mamma."

But Lady Annabel could not speak for weeping.

"Are you sure, mamma, that nothing has been done to my head?" continued Venetia. "Why, what is this?" and she touched a light bandage on her brow.

"My darling, you have been ill, and you have lost blood; but

now you are getting quite well. I have been very unhappy about you ; but now I am quite happy, my sweet, sweet child."

"How long have I been ill?"

"You have been very ill indeed for four or five days ; you have had a fever, Venetia ; but now the fever is gone, and you are only a little weak, and you will soon be well."

"A fever ! and how did I get the fever?"

"Perhaps you caught cold, my child ; but we must not talk too much."

"A fever ! I never had a fever before. A fever is like a dream."

"Hush ! sweet love. Indeed you must not speak."

"Give me your hand, mamma ; I will not speak if you will let me hold your hand. I thought in the fever that we were parted."

"I have never left your side, my child, day or night," said Lady Annabel, not without agitation.

"All this time !—all these days and nights ! No one would do that but you, mamma. You think only of me."

"You repay me by your love, Venetia," said Lady Annabel, feeling that her daughter ought not to speak, yet irresistibly impelled to lead out her thoughts.

"How can I help loving you, my dear mamma?"

"You do love me, you do love me very much ; do you not, sweet child?"

"Better than all the world," replied Venetia to her enraptured parent. "And yet, in the fever I seemed to love some one else : but fevers are like dreams ; they are not true."

Lady Annabel pressed her lips gently to her daughter's, and whispered her that she must speak no more.

When Mr. Hawkins returned, he gave a favourable report of Venetia. He said that all danger was now past, and that all that was required for her recovery were time, care, and repose. He repeated to Lady Annabel alone that the attack was solely to be ascribed to some great mental shock which her daughter had received, and which suddenly had affected her circulation ; leaving it, after this formal intimation, entirely to the mother to take those steps in reference to the cause, whatever it might be, which she should deem expedient.

In the evening, Lady Annabel stole down for a few moments to Dr. Masham, laden with joyful intelligence ; assured of the safety of her child, and, what was still more precious, of her heart, and even voluntarily promising her friend that she should herself sleep this night in her daughter's chamber, on the sofa-bed. The Doctor, therefore, now bade her adieu, and said that he should ride over from Marringhurst every day, to hear how their patient was proceeding.

From this time, the recovery of Venetia, though slow, was gradual. She experienced no relapse, and in a few weeks quitted her bed. She was rather surprised at her altered appearance when it first met her glance in the mirror, but scarcely made any observation on the loss of her locks. During this interval, the mind of Venetia had been quite dormant; the rage of the fever, and the violent remedies to which it had been necessary to have recourse, had so exhausted her, that she had not energy enough to think. All that she felt was a strange indefinite conviction that some occurrence had taken place with which her memory could not grapple. But as her strength returned, and as she gradually resumed her usual health, by proportionate though almost invisible degrees her memory returned to her, and her intelligence. She clearly recollected and comprehended what had taken place. She recalled the past, compared incidents, weighed circumstances, sifted and balanced the impressions that now crowded upon her consciousness. It is difficult to describe each link in the metaphysical chain which at length connected the mind of Venetia Herbert with her actual experience and precise situation. It was, however, at length perfect, and gradually formed as she sat in an invalid chair, apparently listless, not yet venturing on any occupation, or occasionally amused for a moment by her mother reading to her. But when her mind had thus resumed its natural tone, and in time its accustomed vigour, the past demanded all her solicitude. At length the mystery of her birth was revealed to her. She was the daughter of Marmion Herbert—and who was Marmion Herbert? The portrait rose before her. How distinct was the form—how definite the countenance! No common personage was Marmion Herbert, even had he not won his wife, and celebrated his daughter in such witching strains. Genius was stamped on his lofty brow, and spoke in his brilliant eye; nobility was in all his form. This chivalric poet was her father. She had read, she had dreamed of such beings, she had never seen them. If she quitted the solitude in which she lived, would she see men like her father? No other could ever satisfy her imagination; all beneath that standard would rank but as imperfect creations in her fancy. And this father, he was dead. No doubt. Ah! was there indeed no doubt? Eager as was her curiosity on this all-absorbing subject, Venetia could never summon courage to speak upon it to her mother. Her first disobedience, or rather her first deception of her mother, in reference to this very subject, had brought, and brought so swiftly on its retributive wings, such disastrous consequences, that any allusion to Lady Annabel was restrained by a species of superstitious fear, against which Venetia could not contend. Then her father was either dead or living. That was certain. If dead, it

was clear that his memory, however cherished by his relict, was associated with feelings too keen to admit of any other but solitary indulgence. If living, there was a mystery connected with her parents, a mystery evidently of a painful character, and one which it was a prime object with her mother to conceal and to suppress. Could Venetia, then, in defiance of that mother, that fond devoted mother, that mother who had watched through long days and long nights over her sick bed, and who now, without a murmur, was a prisoner to this very room, only to comfort and console her child—could Venetia take any step which might occasion this matchless parent even a transient pang? No; it was impossible. To her mother she could never speak. And yet, to remain enveloped in the present mystery, she was sensible, was equally insufferable. All she asked, all she wanted to know,—was he alive? If he were alive, then, although she could not see him, though she might never see him, she could exist upon his idea; she could conjure up romances of future existence with him; she could live upon the fond hope of some day calling him father, and receiving from his hands the fervid blessing he had already breathed to her in song.

In the meantime her remaining parent commanded all her affections. Even if he were no more, blessed was her lot with such a mother! Lady Annabel seemed only to exist to attend upon her daughter. No lover ever watched with such devotion the wants or even the caprices of his mistress. A thousand times every day Venetia found herself expressing her fondness and her gratitude. It seemed that the late dreadful contingency of losing her daughter had developed in Lady Annabel's heart even additional powers of maternal devotion; and Venetia, the fond and grateful Venetia, ignorant of the strange past, which she believed she so perfectly comprehended, returned thanks to Heaven that her mother was at least spared the mortification of knowing that her daughter, in her absence, had surreptitiously invaded the sanctuary of her secret sorrow.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Venetia had so far recovered that, leaning on her mother's arm, she could resume her walks upon the terrace, Doctor Masham persuaded his friends, as a slight and not unpleasant change of scene, to pay him a visit at Marrinhurst. Since the chamber scene, indeed, Lady Annabel's tie to Cherbury was much weakened. There were certain feelings of pain, and fear, and mortification, now associated with that place which she could not bear to dwell upon, and which greatly balanced those sentiments of refuge and repose,

of peace and love, with which the old hall, in her mind, was heretofore connected. Venetia ever adopted the slightest intimations of a wish on the part of her mother, and so she very readily agreed to fall into the arrangement.

It was rather a long and rough journey to Marringhurst, for they were obliged to use the old chariot; but Venetia forgot her fatigues in the cordial welcome of their host, whose sparkling countenance well expressed the extreme gratification their arrival occasioned him. All that the tenderest solicitude could devise for the agreeable accommodation of the invalid had been zealously concerted; and the constant influence of Doctor Masham's cheerful mind was as beneficial to Lady Annabel as to her daughter. The season was very gay, the place was very pleasant; and although they were only a few miles from home, in a house with which they were so familiar, and their companion one whom they had known intimately all their lives, and of late almost daily seen; yet such is the magic of a change in our habits, however slight, and of the usual theatre of their custom, that this visit to Marringhurst assumed quite the air of an adventure, and seemed at first almost invested with the charm and novelty of travel.

The surrounding country, which, though verdant, was very flat, was well adapted to the limited exertions and still feeble footsteps of an invalid, and Venetia began to study botany with the Doctor, who indeed was not very profound in his attainments in this respect, but knew quite enough to amuse his scholar. By degrees also, as her strength daily increased, they extended their walks; and at length she even mounted her pony, and was fast recovering her elasticity both of body and mind. There were also many pleasant books with which she was unacquainted; a cabinet of classic coins, prints, and pictures. She became, too, interested in the Doctor's rural pursuits; would watch him with his angle, and already meditated a revolution in his garden. So time, on the whole, flew cheerfully on, certainly without any weariness; and the day seldom passed that they did not all congratulate themselves on the pleasant and profitable change.

In the meantime Venetia, when alone, still recurred to that idea that was now so firmly rooted in her mind, that it was quite out of the power of any social discipline to divert her attention from it. She was often the sole companion of the Doctor, and she had long resolved to seize a favourable opportunity to appeal to him on the subject of her father. It so happened that she was walking alone with him one morning in the neighbourhood of Marringhurst, having gone to visit the remains of a Roman encampment in the immediate vicinity. When they had arrived at the spot, and the Doctor had

delivered his usual lecture on the locality, they sat down together on a mound, that Venetia might rest herself.

"Were you ever in Italy, Doctor Masham?" said Venetia.

"I never was out of my native country," said the Doctor. "I once, indeed, was about making the grand tour with a pupil of mine at Oxford, but circumstances interfered which changed his plans, and so I remain a regular John Bull."

"Was my father at Oxford?" said Venetia, very quietly.

"He was," replied the Doctor, looking very confused.

"I should like to see Oxford very much," said Venetia.

"It is a most interesting seat of learning," said the Doctor, quite delighted to change the subject. "Whether we consider its antiquity, its learning, the influence it has exercised upon the history of the country, its magnificent endowments, its splendid buildings, its great colleges, libraries, and museums, or that it is one of the principal head-quarters of all the hope of England—our youth, it is not too much to affirm that there is scarcely a spot on the face of the globe of equal interest and importance."

"It is not for its colleges, or libraries, or museums, or all its splendid buildings," observed Venetia, "that I should wish to see it. I wish to see it because my father was once there. I should like to see a place where I was quite certain my father had been."

"Still harping of her father," thought the Doctor to himself, and growing very uneasy; yet, from his very anxiety to turn the subject, quite incapable of saying an appropriate word.

"Do you remember my father at Oxford, Doctor Masham?" said Venetia.

"Yes! no, yes!" said the Doctor, rather colouring; "that is, he must have been there in my time, I rather think."

"But you do not recollect him?" said Venetia, pressing the question.

"Why," rejoined the Doctor, a little more collected, "when you remember that there are between two and three thousand young men at the university, you must not consider it very surprising that I might not recollect your father."

"No," said Venetia, "perhaps not: and yet I cannot help thinking that he must always have been a person who, if once seen, would not easily have been forgotten."

"Here is an *Erica vagans*," said the Doctor, picking a flower; "it is rather uncommon about here;" and handing it at the same time to Venetia.

"My father must have been very young when he died?" said Venetia, scarcely looking at the flower.

"Yes, your father was very young," he replied.

"Where did he die?"

"I cannot answer that question."

"Where was he buried?"

"You know, my dear young lady, that the subject is too tender for any one to converse with your poor mother upon it. It is not in my power to give you the information you desire. Be satisfied, my dear Miss Herbert, that a gracious Providence has spared to you one parent, and one so inestimable."

"I trust I know how to appreciate so great a blessing," replied Venetia; "but I should be sorry if the natural interest which all children must take in those who have given them birth, should be looked upon as idle and unjustifiable curiosity."

"My dear young lady, you misapprehend me."

"No, Doctor Masham, indeed I do not," replied Venetia, with firmness. "I can easily conceive that the mention of my father may for various reasons be insupportable to my mother; it is enough for me that I am convinced such is the case: my lips are sealed to her for ever upon the subject; but I cannot recognise the necessity of this constraint to others. For a long time I was kept in ignorance whether I had a father or not. I have discovered, no matter how, who he was. I believe, pardon me, my dearest friend, I cannot help believing, that you were acquainted, or, at least, that you know something of him; and I entreat you! yes," repeated Venetia with great emphasis, laying her hand upon his arm, and looking with earnestness in his face, "I entreat you, by all your kind feelings to my mother and myself,—by all that friendship we so prize,—by the urgent solicitation of a daughter who is influenced in her curiosity by no light or unworthy feeling,—yes! by all the claims of a child to information which ought not to be withheld from her, tell me, tell me all, tell me something! Speak, Dr. Masham, do speak!"

"My dear young lady," said the Doctor, with a glistening eye, "it is better that we should both be silent."

"No, indeed," replied Venetia. "it is not better, it is not well that we should be silent. Candour is a great virtue. There is a charm, a healthy charm, in frankness. Why this mystery? Why these secrets? Have they worked good? Have they benefited us? Oh! my friend, I would not say so to my mother, I would not be tempted by any sufferings to pain for an instant her pure and affectionate heart; but indeed, Doctor Masham, indeed, indeed, what I tell you is true, all my late illness, my present state, all, all are attributable but to one cause, this mystery about my father!"

"What can I tell you?" said the unhappy Masham.

"Tell me only one fact. I ask no more. Yes! I promise you, solemnly I promise you, I will ask no more. Tell me, does he live?"

"He does!" said the Doctor. Venetia sank upon his shoulder.

"My dear young lady, my darling young lady!" said the Doctor;—"she has fainted. What can I do?" The unfortunate Doctor placed Venetia in a reclining posture, and hurried to a brook that was nigh, and brought water in his hand to sprinkle on her. She revived; she made a struggle to restore herself.

"It is nothing," she said, "I am resolved to be well. I am well. I am myself again. He lives; my father lives! I was confident of it! I will ask no more. I am true to my word. Oh! Doctor Masham, you have always been my kind friend, but you have never yet conferred on me a favour like the one you have just bestowed."

"But it is well," said the Doctor, "as you know so much, that you should know more."

"Yes! yes!"

"As we walk along," he continued, "we will converse, or at another time; there is no lack of opportunity."

"No, now, now!" eagerly exclaimed Venetia, "I am quite well. It was not pain or illness that overcame me. Now let us walk, now let us talk of these things. He lives?"

"I have little to add," said Dr. Masham, after a moment's thought; "but this, however painful, it is necessary for you to know, that your father is unworthy of your mother, utterly; they are separated; they never can be reunited."

"Never?" said Venetia.

"Never," replied Dr. Masham; "and I now warn you; if, indeed, as I cannot doubt, you love your mother; if her peace of mind and happiness are, as I hesitate not to believe, the principal objects of your life; upon this subject with her be for ever silent. Seek to penetrate no mysteries, spare all allusions, banish, if possible, the idea of your father from your memory. Enough, you know he lives. We know no more. Your mother labours to forget him; her only consolation for sorrows such as few women ever experienced, is her child, yourself, your love. Now be no niggard with it. Cling to this unrivalled parent, who has dedicated her life to you. Soothe her sufferings, endeavour to make her share your happiness; but, of this be certain, that if you raise up the name and memory of your father between your mother and yourself, her life will be the forfeit!"

"His name shall never pass my lips," said Venetia; "solemnly I swear it. That his image shall be banished from my heart is too much to ask, and more than it is in my power to grant. But I am my mother's child. I will exist only for her; and if my love can console her, she shall never be without solace. I thank you, Doctor, for all your kindness. We will never talk again upon the subject; yet, believe me, you have acted wisely, you have done good."

CHAPTER XI.

VENETIA observed her promise to Doctor Masham with strictness. She never alluded to her father, and his name never escaped her mother's lips. Whether Doctor Masham apprised Lady Annabel of the conversation that had taken place between himself and her daughter, it is not in our power to mention. The visit to Marringhurst was not a short one. It was a relief both to Lady Annabel and Venetia, after all that had occurred, to enjoy the constant society of their friend; and this change of life, though apparently so slight, proved highly beneficial to Venetia. She daily recovered her health, and a degree of mental composure which she had not for some time enjoyed. On the whole she was greatly satisfied with the discoveries which she had made. She had ascertained the name and the existence of her father: his very form and appearance were now no longer matter for conjecture; and in a degree she had even communicated with him. Time, she still believed, would develope even further wonders. She clung to an irresistible conviction that she should yet see him; that he might even again be united to her mother. She indulged in dreams as to his present pursuits and position: she repeated to herself his verses, and remembered his genius^o with pride and consolation.

They returned to Cherbury, they resumed the accustomed tenour of their lives, as if nothing had occurred to disturb it. The fondness between the mother and her daughter was unbroken and undiminished. They shared again the same studies and the same amusements. Lady Annabel perhaps indulged the conviction that Venetia had imbibed the belief that her father was no more, and yet in truth that father was the sole idea on which her child ever brooded. Venetia had her secret now; and often as she looked up at the windows of the uninhabited portion of the building, she remembered with concealed, but not less keen exultation, that she had penetrated their mystery. She could muse for hours over all that chamber had revealed to her, and indulge in a thousand visions, of which her father was the centre. She was his "own Venetia." Thus he had hailed her at her birth, and thus he might yet again acknowledge her. If she could only ascertain where he existed! What if she could, and she were to communicate with him? He must love her. Her heart assured her he must love her. She could not believe, if they were to meet, that his breast could resist the silent appeal which the sight merely of his only child would suffice to make. Oh! why had her parents parted? What could

have been his fault? He was so young! But a few, few years older than herself, when her mother must have seen him for the last time. Yes! for the last time beheld that beautiful form, and that countenance that seemed breathing only with genius and love. He might have been imprudent, rash, violent; but she would not credit for an instant that a stain could attach to the honour or the spirit of Marmion Herbert.

The summer wore away. One morning, as Lady Annabel and Venetia were sitting together, Mistress Pouncefort bustled into the room with a countenance radiant with smiles and wonderment. Her ostensible business was to place upon the table a vase of flowers, but it was very evident that her presence was occasioned by affairs of far greater urgency. The vase was safely deposited; Mistress Pouncefort gave the last touch to the arrangement of the flowers; she lingered about Lady Annabel. At length she said, "I suppose you have heard the news, my lady?"

"Indeed, Pouncefort, I have not," replied Lady Annabel, very quietly. "What news?"

"My lord is coming to the abbey."

"Indeed!"

"Oh! yes, my lady," said Mistress Pouncefort; "I am not at all surprised your ladyship should be so astonished. Never to write, too! Well, I must say he might have given us a line. But he is coming, I am certain sure of that, my lady. My lord's gentleman has been down these two days; and all his dogs and guns too, my lady. And the keeper is ordered to be quite ready, my lady, for the first. I wonder if there is going to be a party. I should not be at all surprised."

"Plantagenet returned!" said Lady Annabel. "Well, I shall be very glad to see him again."

"So shall I, my lady," said Mistress Pouncefort; "but I dare say we shall hardly know him again, he must be so grown. Trimmer has been over to the abbey, my lady, and saw my lord's valet. Quite the fine gentleman, Trimmer says. I was thinking of walking over myself this afternoon, to see poor Mrs. Quin, my lady; I dare say we might be of use, and neighbours should be handy, as they say. She is a very respectable woman, poor Mrs. Quin, and I am sure for my part, if your ladyship has no objection, I should be very glad to be of service to her."

"I have of course no objection, Pouncefort, to your being of service to the housekeeper, but has she required your assistance?"

"Why no, my lady, but poor Mrs. Quin would hardly like to ask for anything, my lady; but I am sure we might be of very great use, for my lord's gentleman seems very dissatisfied at his recep-

tion, Trimmer says. He has his hot breakfast every morning, my lady, and poor Mrs. Quin says——”

“Well, Pauncefort, that will do,” said Lady Annabel, and the functionary disappeared.

“We have almost forgotten Plantagenet, Venetia,” added Lady Annabel, addressing herself to her daughter.

“He has forgotten us, I think, mamma,” said Venetia.

END OF THE SECOND BOOK.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

FIVE years had elapsed since Lord Cadurcis had quitted the seat of his fathers, nor did the fair inhabitants of Cherbury hear of his return without emotion. Although the intercourse between them during this interval had from the first been too slightly maintained, and of late years had entirely died off, his return was, nevertheless, an event which recalled old times and revived old associations. His visit to the hall was looked forward to with interest. He did not long keep his former friends in suspense; for although he was not uninfluenced by some degree of embarrassment from the consciousness of neglect on his side, rendered more keen now that he again found himself in the scene endeared by the remembrance of their kindness, he was, nevertheless, both too well bred and too warm-hearted to procrastinate the performance of a duty which the regulations of society and natural impulse alike assured him was indispensable. On the very morning, therefore, after his arrival, having sauntered awhile over the old abbey and strolled over the park, mused over his mother's tomb with emotion, not the less deep because there was no outward and visible sign of its influence, he ordered his horses, and directed his way through the accustomed woods to Cherbury.

Five years had not passed away without their effects at least upon the exterior being of Cadurcis. Although still a youth, his appearance was manly. A thoughtful air had become habitual to a countenance melancholy even in his childhood. Nor was its early promise of beauty unfulfilled; although its expression was peculiar, and less pleasing than impressive. His long dark locks shaded a pale and lofty brow that well became a cast of features delicately

moulded, yet reserved and haughty, and perhaps even somewhat scornful. His figure had set into a form of remarkable slightness and elegance, and distinguished for its symmetry. Altogether his general mien was calculated to attract attention and to excite interest.

His vacations while at Eton had been spent by Lord Cadureis in the family of his noble guardian, one of the king's ministers. Here he had been gradually initiated in the habits and manners of luxurious and refined society. Since he had quitted Eton he had passed a season, previous to his impending residence at Cambridge, in the same sphere. The opportunities thus offered had not been lost upon a disposition which, with all its native reserve, was singularly susceptible. Cadureis had quickly imbibed the tone and adopted the usages of the circle in which he moved. Naturally impatient of control, he endeavoured by his precocious manhood to secure the respect and independence which would scarcely have been paid or permitted to his years. From an early period he never permitted himself to be treated as a boy; and his guardian, a man whose whole soul was concentrated in the world, humoured a bent which he approved and from which he augured the most complete success. Attracted by the promising talents and the premature character of his ward, he had spared more time to assist the development of his mind and the formation of his manners than might have been expected from a minister of state. His hopes, indeed, rested with confidence on his youthful relative, and he looked forward with no common emotion to the moment when he should have the honour of introducing to public life one calculated to confer so much credit on his tutor, and shed so much lustre on his party. The reader will, therefore, not be surprised if at this then unrivalled period of political excitement, when the existence of our colonial empire was at stake, Cadureis, with his impetuous feelings, had imbibed to their very fullest extent all the plans, prejudices, and passions of his political connections. He was, indeed, what the circumstances of the times and his extreme youth might well excuse, if not justify, a most violent partisan. Bold, sanguine, resolute, and intolerant, it was difficult to persuade him that any opinions could be just which were opposed to those of the circle in which he lived; and out of that pale, it must be owned, he was as little inclined to recognise the existence of ability as of truth.

As Lord Cadureis slowly directed his way through the woods and park of Cherbury, past years recurred to him like a faint yet pleasing dream. Among these meads and bowers had glided away the only happy years of his boyhood—the only period of his early life to which he could look back without disgust. He recalled the secret exultation with which, in company with his poor mother, he had

first repaired to Cadurcis, about to take possession of what, to his inexperienced imagination, then appeared a vast and noble inheritance, and for the first time in his life to occupy a position not unworthy of his rank. For how many domestic mortifications did the first sight of that old abbey compensate! How often, in pacing its venerable galleries and solemn cloisters, and musing over the memory of an ancient and illustrious ancestry, had he forgotten those bitter passages of daily existence, so humbling to his vanity and so harassing to his heart! He had beheld that morn, after an interval of many years, the tomb of his mother. That simple and solitary monument had revived and impressed upon him a conviction that too easily escaped in the various life and busy scenes in which he had since moved—the conviction of his worldly desolation and utter loneliness. He had no parents, no relations; now that he was for a moment free from the artificial life in which he had of late mingled, he felt that he had no friends. The image of his mother came back to him, softened by the magical tint of years; after all she was his mother, and a deep sharer in all his joys and woes. Transported to the old haunts of his innocent and warm-hearted childhood, he sighed for a finer and a sweeter sympathy than was ever yielded by the roof which he had lately quitted—a habitation, but not a home. He conjured up the picture of his guardian, existing in a whirl of official bustle and social excitement. A dreamy reminiscence of finer impulses stole over the heart of Cadurcis. The dazzling pageant of metropolitan splendour faded away before the bright scene of nature that surrounded him. He felt the freshness of the fragrant breeze; he gazed with admiration on the still and ancient woods; and his pure and lively blood bubbled beneath the influence of the golden sunbeams. Before him rose the halls of Cherbury, that roof where he had been so happy, that roof to which he had appeared so ungrateful. The memory of a thousand acts of kindness, of a thousand soft and soothing traits of affection, recurred to him with a freshness which startled as much as it pleased him. Not to him only, but to his mother—that mother whose loss he had lived to deplore—had the inmates of Cherbury been ministering angels of peace and joy. Oh! that indeed had been a home; there indeed had been days of happiness; there indeed he had found sympathy, and solace and succour! And now he was returning to them a stranger, to fulfil one of the formal duties of society in paying them his cold respects—an attention which he could scarcely have avoided offering had he been to them the merest acquaintance, instead of having found within those walls a home not merely in words, but friendship the most delicate and love the most pure, a second parent, and the only being whom he had ever styled sister!

The sight of Cadurcis became dim with emotion as the associations

of old scenes and his impending interview with Venetia brought back the past with a power which he had rarely experienced in the playing-fields of Eton, or the saloons of London. Five years! It was an awful chasm in their acquaintance.

He despaired of reviving the kindness which had been broken by such a dreary interval, and broken on his side so wilfully; and yet he began to feel that unless met with that kindness he should be very miserable. Sooth to say, he was not a little embarrassed, and scarcely knew which contingency he most desired, to meet, or to escape from her. He almost repented his return to Cadurcis, and yet to see Venetia again he felt must be exquisite pleasure. Influenced by these feelings he arrived at the hall steps, and so, dismounting and giving his horse to his groom, Cadurcis, with a palpitating heart and faltering hand, formally rang the bell of that hall which in old days he entered at all seasons without ceremony.

Never, perhaps, did a man feel more nervous; he grew pale, paler even than usual, and his whole frame trembled as the approaching footstep of the servant assured him the door was about to open. He longed now that the family might not be at home, that he might at least gain four-and-twenty hours to prepare himself. But the family were at home and he was obliged to enter. He stopped for a moment in the hall under the pretence of examining the old familiar scene, but it was merely to collect himself, for his sight was clouded; spoke to the old servant, to reassure himself by the sound of his own voice, but the husky words seemed to stick in his throat; ascended the staircase with tottering steps, and leant against the banister as he heard his name announced. The effort, however, must be made; it was too late to recede; and Lord Cadurcis, entering the terrace-room, extended his hand to Lady Annabel Herbert. She was not in the least changed, but looked as beautiful and serene as usual. Her salutation, though far from deficient in warmth, was a little more dignified than that which Plantagenet remembered; but still her presence reassured him, and while he pressed her hand with earnestness he contrived to murmur forth with pleasing emotion his delight at again meeting her. Strange to say, in the absorbing agitation of the moment, all thought of Venetia had vanished; and it was when he had turned and beheld a maiden of the most exquisite beauty that his vision had ever lighted on, who had just risen from her seat and was at the moment saluting him, that he entirely lost his presence of mind; he turned scarlet, was quite silent, made an awkward bow, and then stood perfectly fixed.

"My daughter," said Lady Annabel, slightly pointing to Venetia; will not you be seated?"

Cadurcis fell into a chair in absolute confusion. The rare and

surpassing beauty of Venetia, his own stupidity, his admiration of her, his contempt for himself, the sight of the old chamber, the recollection of the past, the minutest incidents of which seemed all suddenly to crowd upon his memory, the painful consciousness of the revolution which had occurred in his position in the family, proved by his first being obliged to be introduced to Venetia, and then being addressed so formally by his title by her mother; all these impressions united overcame him—he could not speak, he sat silent and confounded; and had it not been for the imperturbable self-composure and delicate and amiable consideration of Lady Annabel, it would have been impossible for him to have remained in a room where he experienced the most agonising embarrassment.

Under cover, however, of a discharge of discreet inquiries as to when he arrived, how long he meant to stay, whether he found Cadurcis altered, and similar interrogations which required no extraordinary exertion of his lordship's intellect to answer, but to which he nevertheless contrived to give the most inconsistent and contradictory responses, Cadurcis in time recovered himself sufficiently to maintain a fair though not very brilliant conversation, and even ventured occasionally to address an observation to Venetia, who was seated at her work perfectly composed, but who replied to all his remarks with the same sweet voice and artless simplicity which had characterised her childhood, though time and thought had, by their blended influence, perhaps somewhat deprived her of that wild grace and sparkling gaiety for which she was once so eminent.

These great disenchanters of humanity, if indeed they had stolen away some of the fascinating qualities of infancy, had amply recompensed Venetia Herbert for the loss by the additional and commanding charms which they had conferred on her. From a beautiful child she had expanded into a most beautiful woman. She had now entirely recovered from her illness, of which the only visible effect was the addition that it had made to her stature, already slightly above the middle height, but of the most exquisite symmetry. Like her mother, she did not wear powder, then usual in society; but her auburn hair, which was of the finest texture, descended in long and luxuriant tresses far over her shoulders, braided with ribands, perfectly exposing her pellucid brow, here and there tinted with an undulating vein, for she had retained, if possible with increased lustre, the dazzling complexion of her infancy. If the rose upon the cheek were less vivid than of yore, the dimples were certainly more developed; the clear grey eye was shadowed by long dark lashes, and every smile and movement of those ruby lips revealed teeth exquisitely small and regular, and fresh and brilliant as pearls just plucked by a diver.

Conversation proceeded and improved. Cadurcis became more easy and more fluent. His memory, which seemed suddenly to have returned to him with unusual vigour, wonderfully served him. There was scarcely an individual of whom he did not contrive to inquire, from Doctor Masham to Mistress Pouncefort; he was resolved to show that if he had neglected, he had at least not forgotten them. Nor did he exhibit the slightest indication of terminating his visit; so that Lady Annabel, aware that he was alone at the abbey and that he could have no engagement in the neighbourhood, could not refrain from inviting him to remain and dine with them. The invitation was accepted without hesitation. In due course of time Cadurcis attended the ladies in their walk; it was a delightful stroll in the park, though he felt some slight emotion when he found himself addressing Venetia by the title of "Miss Herbert." When he had exhausted all the topics of local interest, he had a great deal to say about himself in answer to the inquiries of Lady Annabel. He spoke with so much feeling and simplicity of his first days at Eton, and the misery he experienced on first quitting Cherbury, that his details could not fail of being agreeable to those whose natural self-esteem they so agreeably flattered. Then he dwelt upon his casual acquaintance with London society, and Lady Annabel was gratified to observe, from many incidental observations, that his principles were in every respect of the right tone; and that he had zealously enlisted himself in the ranks of that national party who opposed themselves to the disorganising opinions then afloat. He spoke of his impending residence at the university with the affectionate anticipations which might have been expected from a devoted child of the ancient and orthodox institutions of his country, and seemed perfectly impressed with the responsible duties for which he was destined, as an hereditary legislator of England. On the whole, his carriage and conversation afforded a delightful evidence of a pure, and earnest, and frank, and gifted mind, that had acquired at a very early age much of the mature and fixed character of manhood, without losing anything of that boyish sincerity and simplicity that are too often the penalty of experience.

The dinner passed in pleasant conversation, and if they were no longer familiar, they were at least cordial. Cadurcis spoke of Dr. Masham with affectionate respect, and mentioned his intention of visiting Marrington on the following day. He ventured to hope that Lady Annabel and Miss Herbert might accompany him, and it was arranged that his wish should be gratified. The evening drew on apace, and Lady Annabel was greatly pleased when Lord Cadurcis expressed his wish to remain for their evening prayers. He was indeed sincerely religious; and as he knelt in the old chapel that had been the hallowed scene of his boyish devotions, he offered

his ardent thanksgivings to his Creator who had mercifully kept his soul pure and true, and allowed him, after so long an estrangement from the sweet spot of his childhood, once more to mingle his supplications with his kind and virtuous friends.

Influenced by the solemn sounds still lingering in his ear, Cadurcis bade them farewell for the night, with an earnestness of manner and depth of feeling which he would scarcely have ventured to exhibit at their first meeting. "Good night, dear Lady Annabel," he said, as he pressed her hand; "you know not how happy, how grateful I feel, to be once more at Cherbury. Good night, Venetia!"

That last word lingered on his lips; it was uttered in a tone at once mournful and sweet, and her hand was unconsciously retained for a moment in his;—but for a moment; and yet in that brief instant a thousand thoughts seemed to course through his brain.

Before Venetia retired to rest she remained for a few minutes in her mother's room. "What do you think of him, mamma?" she said; "is he not very changed?"

"He is, my love," replied Lady Annabel, "what I sometimes thought he might, what I always hoped he would be."

"He really seemed happy to meet us again, and yet how strange that for years he should never have communicated with us."

"Not so very strange, my love! He was but a child when we parted, and he has felt embarrassment in resuming connections which for a long interval had been inevitably severed. Remember what a change his life had to endure; few, after such an interval, would have returned with feelings so kind and so pure!"

"He was always a favourite of yours, mamma!"

"I always fancied that I observed in him the seeds of great virtues and great talents; but I was not so sanguine that they would have flourished as they appear to have done."

In the meantime the subject of their observations strolled home on foot—for he had dismissed his horses—to the abbey. It was a brilliant night, and the white beams of the moon fell full upon the old monastic pile, of which massy portions were in dark shade while the light gracefully rested on the projecting ornaments of the building, and played, as it were, with the fretted and fantastic pinnacles. Behind were the savage hills, softened by the hour; and on the right extended the still and luminous lake. Cadurcis rested for a moment and gazed upon the fair, yet solemn, scene. The dreams of ambition that occasionally distracted him were dead. The surrounding scene harmonized with the thoughts of purity, repose, and beauty that filled his soul. Why should he ever leave this spot, sacred to him by the finest emotions of his nature? Why should he not at once quit that world which he had just entered, while he could quit it

without remorse? If ever there existed a being who was his own master,—who might mould his destiny at his will,—it seemed to be Cadurcis. His lone yet independent situation,—his impetuous yet firm volition,—alike qualified him to achieve the career most grateful to his disposition. Let him, then, achieve it here; here let him find that solitude he had ever loved, softened by that affection for which he had ever sighed, and which here only he had ever found. It seemed to him that there was only one being in the world whom he had ever loved, and that was Venetia Herbert: it seemed to him that there was only one thing in this world worth living for, and that was the enjoyment of her sweet heart. The pure-minded, the rare, the gracious creature! Why should she ever quit these immaculate bowers wherein she had been so mystically and delicately bred? Why should she ever quit the fond roof of Cherbury, but to shed grace and love amid the cloisters of Cadurcis? Her life hitherto had been an enchanted tale; why should the spell ever break? Why should she enter that world where care, disappointment, mortification, misery, must await her? He for a season had left the magic circle of her life, and perhaps it was well. He was a man, and so he should know all. But he had returned, thank Heaven! he had returned, and never again would he quit her. Fool that he had been ever to have neglected her! And for a reason that ought to have made him doubly her friend, her solace, her protector. Oh! to think of the sneers or the taunts of the world calling for a moment the colour from that bright cheek, or dusking for an instant the radiance of that brilliant eye! His heart ached at the thought of her unhappiness, and he longed to press her to it, and cherish her like some innocent dove that had flown from the terrors of a pursuing hawk.

CHAPTER II.

“WELL, Pauncefort,” said Lord Cadurcis, smiling, as he renewed his acquaintance with his old friend, “I hope you have not forgotten my last words, and have taken care of your young lady.”

“Oh! dear, my lord,” said Mistress Pauncefort, blushing and simpering. “Well to be sure, how your lordship has surprised us all! I thought we were never going to see you again!”

“You know I told you I should return: and now I mean never to leave you again.”

“Never is a long word, my lord,” said Mistress Pauncefort, looking very archly.

“Ah! but I mean to settle, regularly to settle here,” said Lord Cadurcis.

"Marry and settle, my lord," said Mistress Pauncefort, still more arch.

"And why not?" inquired Lord Cadurcis, laughing.

"That is just what I said last night," exclaimed Mistress Pauncefort, eagerly. "And why not? for I said, says I, his lordship must marry sooner or later, and the sooner the better, say I: and to be sure he is very young, but what of that? for, says I, no one can say he does not look quite a man. And really, my lord, saving your presence, you are grown indeed."

"Pish!" said Lord Cadurcis, turning away and laughing, "I have left off growing, Pauncefort, and all those sort of things."

"You have not forgotten our last visit to Marrington?" said Lord Cadurcis to Venetia, as the comfortable mansion of the worthy Doctor appeared in sight.

"I have forgotten nothing," replied Venetia with a faint smile; "I do not know what it is to forget. My life has been so uneventful that every past incident, however slight, is as fresh in my memory as if it occurred yesterday."

"Then you remember the strawberries and cream?" said Lord Cadurcis.

"And other circumstances less agreeable," he fancied Venetia observed, but her voice was low.

"Do you know, Lady Annabel," said Lord Cadurcis, "that I was very nearly riding my pony to-day? I wish to bring back old times with the utmost possible completeness; I wish for a moment to believe that I have never quitted Cherbury."

"Let us think only of the present now," said Lady Annabel in a cheerful voice, "for it is very agreeable. I see the good Doctor; he has discovered us."

"I wonder whom he fancies Lord Cadurcis to be," said Venetia.

"Have you no occasional cavalier for whom at a distance I may be mistaken?" inquired his lordship in a tone of affected carelessness, though in truth it was an inquiry that he made not without anxiety.

"Everything remains here exactly as you left it," replied Lady Annabel, with some quickness, yet in a lively tone.

"Happy Cherbury!" exclaimed Lord Cadurcis. "May it indeed never change!"

They rode briskly on; the Doctor was standing at his gate. He saluted Lady Annabel and Venetia with his accustomed cordiality, and then stared at their companion as if waiting for an introduction.

"You forget an old friend, my dear Doctor," said Cadurcis.

"Lord Cadurcis!" exclaimed Dr. Masham. His lordship had

by this time dismounted and eagerly extended his hand to his old tutor.

Having quitted their horses they all entered the house, nor was there naturally any want of conversation. Cadurcis had much information to give and many questions to answer. He was in the highest spirits and the most amiable mood; gay, amusing, and overflowing with kind-heartedness. The Doctor seldom required any inspiration to be joyous, and Lady Annabel was unusually animated. Venetia alone, though cheerful, was calmer than pleased Cadurcis. Time, he sorrowfully observed, had occasioned a greater change in her manner than he could have expected. Youthful as she still was, indeed but on the threshold of womanhood, and exempted, as it seemed she had been, from anything to disturb the clearness of her mind, that enchanting play of fancy which had once characterized her, and which he recalled with a sigh, appeared in a great degree to have deserted her. He watched her countenance with emotion, and, supremely beautiful as it undeniably was, there was a cast of thoughtfulness or suffering impressed upon the features which rendered him mournful he knew not why, and caused him to feel as if a cloud had stolen unexpectedly over the sun and made him shiver.

But there was no time or opportunity for sad reflections; he had to renew his acquaintance with all the sights and curiosities of the rectory, to sing to the canaries, and visit the gold fish, admire the stuffed fox, and wonder that in the space of five years the voracious otter had not yet contrived to devour its prey. Then they refreshed themselves after their ride with a stroll in the Doctor's garden; Cadurcis persisted in attaching himself to Venetia, as in old days, and nothing would prevent him from leading her to the grotto. Lady Annabel walked behind, leaning on the Doctor's arm, narrating, with no fear of being heard, all the history of their friend's return.

"I never was so surprised in my life," said the Doctor; "he is vastly improved; he is quite a man; his carriage is very finished."

"And his principles," said Lady Annabel. "You have no idea, my dear Doctor, how right his opinions seem to be on every subject. He has been brought up in a good school; he does his guardian great credit. He is quite loyal and orthodox in all his opinions; ready to risk his life for our blessed constitution in Church and State. He requested as a favour, that he might remain at our prayers last night. It is delightful for me to see him turn out so well!"

1 2

In the meantime Cadurcis and Venetia entered the grotto.

"The dear Doctor!" said Cadurcis: "five years have brought no visible change even to him; perhaps he may be a degree less agile,

but I will not believe it. And Lady Annabel ; it seems to me your mother is more youthful and beautiful than ever. There is a spell in our air," continued his lordship, with a laughing eye, "for if we have changed, Venetia, ours is, at least, an alteration that bears no sign of decay. We are advancing, but they have not declined ; we are all enchanted."

"I feel changed," said Venetia gravely.

"I left you a child and I find you a woman," said Lord Cadurcis—"a change which who can regret?"

"I would I were a child again," said Venetia.

"We were happy," said Lord Cadurcis, in a thoughtful tone ; and then in an inquiring voice he added, "and so we are now?"

Venetia shook her head.

"Can you be unhappy?"

"To be unhappy would be wicked," said Venetia ; "but my mind has lost its spring."

"Ah ! say not so, Venetia, or you will make even me gloomy. I am happy, positively happy. There must not be a cloud upon your brow."

"You are joyous," said Venetia, "because you are excited. It is the novelty of return that animates you. It will wear off ; you will grow weary, and when you go to the university you will think yourself happy again."

"I do not intend to go to the university," said Cadurcis.

"I understood from you that you were going there immediately."

"My plans are changed," said Cadurcis ; "I do not intend ever to leave home again."

"When you go to Cambridge," said Dr. Masham, who just then reached them, "I shall trouble you with a letter to an old friend of mine whose acquaintance you may find valuable."

Venetia smiled ; Cadurcis bowed, expressed his thanks, and muttered something about talking over the subject with the Doctor.

After this the conversation became general, and at length they all returned to the house to partake of the Doctor's hospitality, who promised to dine at the hall on the morrow. The ride home was agreeable and animated, but the conversation on the part of the ladies was principally maintained by Lady Annabel, who seemed every moment more delighted with the society of Lord Cadurcis, and to sympathise every instant more completely with his frank exposition of his opinions on all subjects. When they returned to Cherbury, Cadurcis remained with them as a matter of course. An invitation was neither expected nor given. Not an allusion was made to the sports of the field, to enjoy which was the original purpose of his visit to the abbey ; and he spoke of to-morrow as of a period which, as usual, was to be spent entirely in their society.

He remained with them, as on the previous night, to the latest possible moment. Although reserved in society, no one could be more fluent with those with whom he was perfectly unembarrassed. He was indeed exceedingly entertaining, and Lady Annabel relaxed into conversation beyond her custom. As for Venetia, she did not speak often, but she listened with interest and was evidently amused. When Cadureis bade them good-night Lady Annabel begged him to breakfast with them; while Venetia, serene, though kind, neither seconded the invitation, nor seemed interested one way or the other in its result

CHAPTER III.

EXCEPT returning to sleep at the abbey, Lord Cadureis was now as much an habitual inmate of Cherbury Hall as in the days of his childhood. He was there almost with the lark, and never quitted its roof until its inmates were about to retire for the night. His guns and dogs, which had been sent down from London with so much pomp of preparation, were unused and unnoticed; and he passed his days in reading Richardson's novels, which he had brought with him from town, to the ladies, and then in riding with them about the country, for he loved to visit all his old haunts, and trace even the very green sward where he first met the gipsies and fancied that he had achieved his emancipation from all the coming cares and annoyances of the world. In this pleasant life several weeks had glided away: Cadureis had entirely resumed his old footing in the family, nor did he attempt to conceal the homage he was paying to the charms of Venetia. She indeed seemed utterly unconscious that such projects had entered, or indeed could enter, the brain of her old play-fellow, with whom, now that she was habituated to his presence and revived by his inspiriting society, she had resumed all her old familiar intimacy; addressing him by his Christian name, as if he had never ceased to be her brother. But Lady Annabel was not so blind as her daughter, and had indeed her vision been as clouded, her faithful minister, Mistress Pouncefort, would have taken care quickly to couch it; for a very short time had elapsed before that vigilant gentlewoman, resolved to convince her mistress that nothing could escape her sleepless scrutiny, and that it was equally in vain for her mistress to hope to possess any secrets without her participation, seized a convenient opportunity before she bid her lady good night, just to inquire "when it might be expected to take place?" and in reply to the very evident asto-

nishment which Lady Annabel testified at this question, and the expression of her extreme displeasure at any conversation on a circumstance for which there was not the slightest foundation, Mistress Pouncefort, after duly flouncing about with every possible symbol of pettish agitation and mortified curiosity, her cheek pale with hesitating impertinence, and her nose quivering with inquisitiveness, condescended to admit with a sceptical sneer, that, of course, no doubt her ladyship knew more of such a subject than she could; it was not her place to know anything of such business; for her part she said nothing; it was not her place, but if it were, she certainly must say that she could not help believing that my lord was looking remarkably sweet on Miss Venetia, and what was more, everybody in the house thought the same, though for her part, whenever they mentioned the circumstance to her, she said nothing, or bid them hold their tongues, for what was it to them; it was not their business, and they could know nothing; and that nothing would displease her ladyship more than chattering on such subjects, and many's the match as good as finished, that's gone off by no worse means than the chitter-chatter of those who should hold their tongues. Therefore she should say no more; but if her ladyship wished her to contradict it, why she could, and the sooner, perhaps, the better.

Lady Annabel observed to her that she wished no such thing, but she desired that Pouncefort would make no more observations on the subject, either to her or to any one else. And then Pouncefort bade her ladyship good night in a huff, catching up her candle with a rather impertinent jerk, and gently slamming the door, as if she had meant to close it quietly, only it had escaped out of her fingers.

Whatever might be the tone, whether of surprise or displeasure, which Lady Annabel thought fit to assume to her attendant on her noticing Lord Cadurcis' attentions to her daughter, there is no doubt that his lordship's conduct had early and long engaged her ladyship's remark, her consideration, and her approval. Without meditating indeed an immediate union between Cadurcis and Venetia, Lady Annabel pleased herself with the prospect of her daughter's eventual marriage with one whom she had known so early and so intimately; who was by nature of a gentle, sincere, and affectionate disposition, and in whom education had carefully instilled the most sound and laudable principles and opinions; one apparently with simple tastes, moderate desires, fair talents, a mind intelligent, if not brilliant, and passions which at the worst had been rather ill-regulated than violent; attached also to Venetia from her childhood, and always visibly affected by her influence. All these moral considerations seemed to offer a fair security for happiness; and

the material ones were neither less promising, nor altogether disregarded by the mother. It was an union which would join broad lands and fair estates; which would place on the brow of her daughter one of the most ancient coronets in England; and, which indeed was the chief of these considerations, would, without exposing Venetia to that contaminating contact with the world from which Lady Annabel recoiled, establish her, without this initiatory and sorrowful experience, in a position superior to which even the blood of the Herberts, though it might flow in so fair and gifted a form as that of Venetia, need not aspire.

Lord Cadurcis had not returned to Cherbury a week before this scheme entered into the head of Lady Annabel. She had always liked him; had always given him credit for good qualities; had always believed that his early defects were the consequence of his mother's injudicious treatment; and that at heart he was an amiable, generous, and trustworthy being, one who might be depended on, with a naturally good judgment, and substantial and sufficient talents, which only required cultivation. When she met him again after so long an interval, and found her early prognostics so fairly, so completely fulfilled, and watched his conduct and conversation, exhibiting alike a well-informed mind, an obliging temper, and, what Lady Annabel valued even above all gifts and blessings, a profound conviction of the truth of all her own opinions, moral, political, and religious, she was quite charmed; she was moved to unusual animation; she grew excited in his praise; his presence delighted her; she entertained for him the warmest affection and reposed in him unbounded confidence. All her hopes became concentrated in the wish of seeing him her son-in-law; and she detected with the most lively satisfaction the immediate impression which Venetia had made upon his heart; for indeed it should not be forgotten, that although Lady Annabel was still young, and although her frame and temperament were alike promising of a long life, it was natural, when she reflected upon the otherwise lone condition of her daughter, that she should tremble at the thought of quitting this world without leaving her child a protector. To Doctor Masham, from whom Lady Annabel had no secrets, she confided in time these happy but covert hopes, and he was not less anxious than herself for their fulfilment. Since the return of Cadurcis the Doctor contrived to be a more frequent visitor at the hall than usual, and he lost no opportunity of silently advancing the object of his friend.

As for Cadurcis himself, it was impossible for him not quickly to discover that no obstacle to his heart's dearest wish would arise on the part of the parent. The demeanour of the daughter somewhat more perplexed him. Venetia indeed had entirely fallen into

her old habits of intimacy and frankness with Plantagenet ; she was as affectionate and as unembarrassed as in former days, and almost as gay ; for his presence and companionship had in a great degree insensibly removed that stillness and gravity which had gradually influenced her mind and conduct. But in that conduct there was, and he observed it with some degree of mortification, a total absence of the consciousness of being the object of the passionate admiration of another. She treated Lord Cadurcis as a brother she much loved, who had returned to his home after a long absence. She liked to listen to his conversation, to hear of his adventures, to consult over his plans. His arrival called a smile to her face, and his departure for the night was always alleviated by some allusion to their meeting on the morrow. But many an ardent gaze on the part of Cadurcis, and many a phrase of emotion, passed unnoticed and unappreciated. His gallantry was entirely thrown away, or, if observed, only occasioned a pretty stare at the unnecessary trouble he gave himself, or the strange ceremony which she supposed an acquaintance with society had taught him. Cadurcis attributed this reception of his veiled and delicate overtures to her ignorance of the world ; and though he sighed for as passionate a return to his strong feelings as the sentiments which animated himself, he was on the whole not displeased, but rather interested, by these indications of a pure and unsophisticated spirit.

CHAPTER IV.

CADURCIS had proposed, and Lady Annabel had seconded the proposition with eager satisfaction, that they should seek some day at the abbey whatever hospitality it might offer ; Dr. Masham was to be of the party, which was, indeed, one of those fanciful expeditions where the same companions, though they meet at all times without restraint and with every convenience of life, seek increased amusement in the novelty of a slight change of habits. With the aid of the neighbouring town of Southport, Cadurcis had made preparations for his friends not entirely unworthy of them, though he affected to the last all the air of a conductor of a wild expedition of discovery, and laughingly impressed upon them the necessity of steeling their minds and bodies to the experience and endurance of the roughest treatment and the most severe hardships.

The morning of this eventful day broke as beautifully as the

preceding ones. Autumn had seldom been more gorgeous than this year. Although he was to play the host, Cadurcis would not deprive himself of his usual visit to the hall; and he appeared there at an early hour to accompany his guests, who were to ride over to the abbey, to husband all their energies for their long rambles through the demesne.

Cadurcis was in high spirits, and Lady Annabel scarcely less joyous. Venetia smiled with her usual sweetness and serenity. They congratulated each other on the charming season; and Mistress Pauncefort received a formal invitation to join the party and go a-nutting with one of her fellow-servants and his lordship's valet. The good Doctor was rather late, but he arrived at last on his stout steed, in his accustomed cheerful mood. Here was a party of pleasure which all agreed must be pleasant; no strangers to amuse, or to be amusing, but formed merely of four human beings who spent every day of their lives in each other's society, between whom there was the most complete sympathy and the most cordial good-will.

By noon they were all mounted on their steeds, and though the air was warmed by a meridian sun shining in a clear sky, there was a gentle breeze abroad, sweet and grateful; and moreover they soon entered the wood and enjoyed the shelter of its verdant shade. The abbey looked most picturesque when they first burst upon it; the nearer and wooded hills, which formed its immediate background, just tinted by the golden pencil of autumn, while the meads of the valley were still emerald green; and the stream, now lost, now winding, glittered here and there in the sun, and gave a life and sprightliness to the landscape which exceeded even the effect of the more distant and expansive lake.

They were received at the abbey by Mistress Pauncefort, who had preceded them, and who welcomed them with a complacent smile. Cadurcis hastened to assist Lady Annabel to dismount, and was a little confused but very pleased when she assured him she needed no assistance but requested him to take care of Venetia. He was just in time to receive her in his arms, where she found herself without the slightest embarrassment. The coolness of the cloisters was grateful after their ride, and they lingered and looked upon the old fountain, and felt the freshness of its fall with satisfaction which all alike expressed. Lady Annabel and Venetia then retired for a while to free themselves from their riding habits, and Cadurcis affectionately taking the arm of Dr. Masham led him a few paces, and then almost involuntarily exclaimed, "My dear Doctor, I think I am the happiest fellow that ever lived!"

"That I trust you may always be, my dear boy," said Doctor Masham; "but what has called forth this particular exclamation?"

"To feel that I am once more at Cadurcis; to feel that I am here once more with you all; to feel that I never shall leave you again."

"Not again?"

"Never!" said Cadurcis. "The experience of these last few weeks, which yet have seemed an age in my existence, has made me resolve never to quit a society where I am persuaded I may obtain a degree of happiness which what is called the world can never afford me."

"What will your guardian say?"

"What care I?"

"A dutiful ward!"

"Poh! the relations between us were formed only to secure my welfare. It is secured; it will be secured by my own resolution."

"And what is that?" inquired Dr. Masham.

"To marry Venetia, if she will accept me."

"And that you do not doubt!"

"We doubt everything when everything is at stake," replied Lord Cadurcis. "I know that her consent would ensure my happiness; and when I reflect, I cannot help being equally persuaded that it would secure hers. Her mother I think would not be adverse to our union. And you, my dear Sir, what do you think?"

"I think," said Doctor Masham, "that whoever marries Venetia will marry the most beautiful and the most gifted of God's creatures; I hope you may marry her; I wish you to marry her; I believe you will marry her, but not yet; you are too young, Lord Cadurcis."

"Oh! no, my dear Doctor, not too young to marry Venetia. Remember I have known her all my life, at least so long as I have been able to form an opinion. How few are the men, my dear Doctor, who are so fortunate as to unite themselves with women whom they have known, as I have known Venetia, for more than seven long years!"

"During five of which you have never seen or heard of her."

"Mine was the fault! And yet I cannot help thinking, as it may probably turn out, as you yourself believe it will turn out, that it is as well that we have been separated for this interval. It has afforded me opportunities for observation which I should never have enjoyed at Cadurcis; and although my lot either way could not have altered the nature of things, I might have been discontented, I might have sighed for a world which now I do not value. It is true I have not seen Venetia for five years, but I find her the same, or changed only by nature, and fulfilling all the rich promise which her childhood intimated. No, my dear Doctor, I respect your opinion

more than that of any man living; but nobody, nothing, can persuade me that I am not as intimately acquainted with Venetia's character, with all her rare virtues, as if we had never separated."

"I do not doubt it," said the Doctor; "high as you may pitch your estimate you cannot overvalue her."

"Then why should we not marry?"

"Because, my dear friend, although you may be perfectly acquainted with Venetia, you cannot be perfectly acquainted with yourself."

"How so?" exclaimed Lord Cadurcis in a tone of surprise, perhaps a little indignant.

"Because it is impossible. No young man of eighteen ever possessed such precious knowledge. I esteem and admire you; I give you every credit for a good heart and a sound head; but it is impossible, at your time of life, that your character can be formed; and until it be, you may marry Venetia and yet be a very miserable man."

"It is formed," said his lordship firmly; "there is not a subject important to a human being on which my opinions are not settled."

"You may live to change them all," said the Doctor, "and that very speedily."

"Impossible!" said Lord Cadurcis. "My dear Doctor, I cannot understand you; you say that you hope—that you wish—even that you believe that I shall marry Venetia; and yet you permit me to infer that our union will only make us miserable. What do you wish me to do?"

"Go to college for a term or two."

"Without Venetia! I should die."

"Well, if you be in a dying state you can return."

"You joke, my dear Doctor."

"My dear boy, I am perfectly serious."

"But she may marry somebody else?"

"I am your only rival," said the Doctor, with a smile; "and though even friends can scarcely be trusted under such circumstances, I promise you not to betray you."

"Your advice is not very pleasant," said his lordship.

"Good advice seldom is," said the Doctor.

"My dear Doctor, I have made up my mind to marry her—and marry her at once. I know her well, you admit that yourself. I do not believe that there ever was a woman like her, that there ever will be a woman like her. Nature has marked her out from other women, and her education has not been less peculiar. Her mystic breeding pleases me. It is something to marry a wife so fair, so pure, so refined, so accomplished, who is, nevertheless, perfectly ignorant of the world. I have dreamt of such things; I have paced

these old cloisters when a boy and when I was miserable at home; and I have had visions, and this was one. I have sighed to live alone with a fair spirit for my minister. Venetia has descended from heaven for me, and for me alone. I am resolved I will pluck this flower with the dew upon its leaves."

"I did not know I was reasoning with a poet," said the Doctor, with a smile. "Had I been conscious of it, I would not have been so rash."

"I have not a grain of poetry in my composition," said his lordship; "I never could write a verse; I was notorious at Eton for begging all their old manuscripts from boys when they left school, to crib from; but I have a heart, and I can feel. I love Venetia—I have always loved her—and, if possible, I will marry her, and marry her at once."

CHAPTER V.

THE reappearance of the ladies at the end of the cloister terminated this conversation, the result of which was rather to confirm Lord Cadurcis in his resolution of instantly urging his suit, than the reverse. He ran forward to greet his friends with a smile, and took his place by the side of Venetia, whom, a little to her surprise, he congratulated in glowing phrase on her charming costume. Indeed she looked very captivating, with a pastoral hat, then much in fashion, and a dress as simple and as sylvan, both showing to admirable advantage her long descending hair, and her agile and springy figure.

Cadurcis proposed that they should ramble over the abbey; he talked of projected alterations, as if he really had the power immediately to effect them, and was desirous of obtaining their opinions before any change was made. So they ascended the staircase which many years before Venetia had mounted for the first time with her mother, and entered that series of small and ill-furnished rooms in which Mrs. Cadurcis had principally resided, and which had undergone no change. The old pictures were examined; these, all agreed, never must move; and the new furniture, it was settled, must be in character with the building. Lady Annabel entered into all the details with an interest and animation which rather amused Dr. Masham. Venetia listened and suggested, and responded to the frequent appeals of Cadurcis to her judgment with an unconscious equanimity not less diverting.

"Now here we really can do something," said his lordship as they entered the saloon, or rather refectory; "here I think we may

effect wonders.—The tapestry must always remain. Is it not magnificent, Venetia?—But what hangings shall we have?—We must keep the old chairs, I think.—Do you approve of the old chairs, Venetia?—And what shall we cover them with?—Shall it be damask?—What do you think, Venetia?—Do you like damask?—And what colour shall it be?—Shall it be crimson?—Shall it be crimson damask, Lady Annabel?—Do you think Venetia would like crimson damask?—Now, Venetia, do give us the benefit of your opinion.”

Then they entered the old gallery; here was to be a great transformation. Marvels were to be effected in the old gallery and many and multiplied were the appeals to the taste and fancy of Venetia.

“I think,” said Lord Cadurcis, “I shall leave the gallery to be arranged when I am settled. The rooms and the saloon shall be done at once. I shall give orders for them to begin instantly. Whom do you recommend, Lady Annabel? Do you think there is any person at Southport who could manage to do it, superintended by our taste? Venetia, what do you think?”

Venetia was standing at the window, rather apart from her companions, looking at the old garden. Lord Cadurcis joined her. “Ah! it has been sadly neglected since my poor mother’s time. We could not do much in those days, but still she loved this garden. I must depend upon you entirely to arrange my garden, Venetia. This spot is sacred to you. You have not forgotten our labours here, have you, Venetia? Ah! those were happy days, and these shall be more happy still. This is your garden; it shall always be called Venetia’s garden.”

“I would have taken care of it when you were away, but ——”

“But what?” inquired Lord Cadurcis anxiously.

“We hardly felt authorized,” replied Venetia very calmly. “We came at first when you left Cadurcis, but at last it did not seem that our presence was very acceptable.”

“The brutes!” exclaimed Lord Cadurcis.

“No, no; good simple people, they were unused to orders from strange masters, and they were perplexed. Besides, we had no right to interfere.”

“No right to interfere! Venetia, my little fellow-labourer, no right to interfere! Why all is yours! Fancy your having no right to interfere at Cadurcis!”

Then they proceeded to the park and wandered to the margin of the lake. There was not a spot, not an object, which did not recall some adventure or incident of childhood. Every moment Lord Cadurcis exclaimed, “Venetia! do you remember this?”—“Venetia! have you forgotten that?”—and every time Venetia smiled,

and proved how faithful was her memory by adding some little unmentioned trait to the lively reminiscences of her companion.

"Well, after all," said Lord Cadureis with a sigh, "my poor mother was a strange woman, and, God bless her! used sometimes to worry me out of my senses! but still she always loved you. No one can deny that. Cherbury was a magic name with her. She loved Lady Annabel, and she loved you, Venetia. It ran in the blood, you see. She would be happy, quite happy, if she saw us all here together, and if she knew——"

"Plantagenet," said Lady Annabel, "you must build a lodge at this end of the park. I cannot conceive anything more effective than an entrance from the Southport road in this quarter."

"Certainly, Lady Annabel, certainly we must build a lodge. Do not you think so, Venetia?"

"Indeed I think it would be a great improvement," replied Venetia; "but you must take care to have a lodge in character with the abbey."

"You shall make a drawing for it," said Lord Cadureis; "it shall be built directly, and it shall be called Venetia Lodge."

The hours flew away, loitering in the park, roaming in the woods. They met Mistress Pauncefort and her friends loaded with plunder, and they offered to Venetia a trophy of their success; but when Venetia, merely to please their kind hearts, accepted their tribute with cordiality and declared there was nothing she liked better, Lord Cadureis would not be satisfied unless he immediately commenced nutting, and each moment he bore to Venetia the produce of his sport, till in time she could scarcely sustain the rich and increasing burden. At length they bent their steps towards home, sufficiently wearied to look forward with welcome to rest and their repast, yet not fatigued, and exhilarated by the atmosphere, for the sun was now in its decline, though in this favoured season there were yet hours enough remaining of enchanting light.

In the refectory they found, to the surprise of all but their host, a banquet. It was just one of those occasions when nothing is expected and everything is welcome and surprising; when, from the unpremeditated air generally assumed, all preparation startles and pleases; when even ladies are not ashamed to eat, and formality appears quite banished. Game of all kinds, teal from the lake, and piles of beautiful fruit, made the table alike tempting and picturesque. Then there were stray bottles of rare wine disinterred from venerable cellars; and, more inspiring even than the choice wine, a host under the influence of every emotion and swayed by every circumstance that can make a man happy and delightful. Oh! they were very gay, and it seemed difficult to believe that care

or sorrow, or the dominion of dark or ungracious passions, could ever disturb sympathies so complete and countenances so radiant.

At the urgent request of Cadurcis, Venetia sang to them; and while she sang, the expression of her countenance and voice harmonizing with the arch hilarity of the subject, Plantagenet for a moment believed that he beheld the little Venetia of his youth, that sunny child so full of mirth and grace, the very recollection of whose lively and bright existence might enliven the gloomiest hour and lighten the heaviest heart.

Enchanted by all that surrounded him,—full of hope, and joy, and plans of future felicity,—emboldened by the kindness of the daughter,—Cadurcis now ventured to urge a request to Lady Annabel, and the request was granted,—for all seemed to feel that it was a day on which nothing was to be refused to their friend. Happy Cadurcis! The child had a holiday, and it fancied itself a man enjoying a triumph. In compliance, therefore, with his wish, it was settled that they should all walk back to the hall; even Dr. Masham declared he was competent to the exertion, but perhaps was half entrapped into the declaration by the promise of a bed at Cherbury. This consent enchanted Cadurcis, who looked forward with exquisite pleasure to the evening walk with Venetia.

CHAPTER VI.

ALTHOUGH the sun had not set, it had sunk behind the hills leading to Cherbury when our friends quitted the abbey. Cadurcis, without hesitation, offered his arm to Venetia, and whether from a secret sympathy with his wishes, or merely from some fortunate accident, Lady Annabel and Dr. Masham strolled on before without busying themselves too earnestly with their companions.

“And how do you think our expedition to Cadurcis has turned out?” inquired the young lord, of Venetia. “Has it been successful?”

“It has been one of the most agreeable days I ever passed,” was the reply.

“Then it has been successful,” rejoined his lordship; “for my only wish was to amuse you.”

“I think we have all been equally amused,” said Venetia. “I never knew mamma in such good spirits. I think ever since you returned she has been unusually light-hearted.”

“And you—has my return lightened only her heart, Venetia?”

“Indeed it has contributed to the happiness of every one.”

"And yet when I first returned I heard you utter a complaint; the first that to my knowledge ever escaped your lips."

"Ah! we cannot be always equally gay."

"Once you were, dear Venetia."

"I was a child then."

"And I, I too was a child; yet I am happy, at least now that I am with you."

"Well, we are both happy now."

"Oh! say that again, say that again, Venetia; for indeed you made me miserable when you told me that you had changed. I cannot bear that you, Venetia, should ever change."

"It is the course of nature, Plantagenet; we all change, everything changes. This day that was so bright is changing fast."

"The stars are as beautiful as the sun, Venetia."

"And what do you infer?"

"That Venetia, a woman, is as beautiful as Venetia, a little girl; and should be as happy."

"Is beauty happiness, Plantagenet?"

"It makes others happy, Venetia; and when we make others happy we should be happy ourselves."

"Few depend upon my influence, and I trust all of them are happy."

"No one depends upon your influence more than I do."

"Well, then, be happy always."

"Would that I might! Ah! Venetia, can I ever forget old days! You were the solace of my dark childhood; you were the charm that first taught me existence was enjoyment. Before I came to Cherbury I never was happy, and since that hour—Ah! Venetia, dear, dearest Venetia, who is like to you!"

"Dear Plantagenet, you were always too kind to me. Would we were children once more!"

"Nay! my own Venetia, you tell me everything changes, and we must not murmur at the course of nature. I would not have our childhood back again, even with all its joys, for there are others yet in store for us, not less pure, not less beautiful. We loved each other then, Venetia, and we love each other now."

"My feelings towards you have never changed, Plantagenet; I heard of you always with interest, and I met you again with heart-felt pleasure."

"Oh! that morning! Have you forgotten that morning! Do you know, you will smile very much, but I really believe that I expected to see my Venetia still a little girl, the very same who greeted me when I first arrived with my mother and behaved so naughtily! And when I saw you, and found what you had become,

and what I ought always to have known you must become, I was so confused I entirely lost my presence of mind. You must have thought me very awkward, very stupid?"

"Indeed, I was rather gratified by observing that you could not meet us again without emotion. I thought it told well for your heart, which I always believed to be most kind, at least, I am sure, to us."

"Kind! Oh! Venetia, that word but ill describes what my heart ever was, what it now is, to you. Venetia! dearest, sweetest Venetia, can you doubt for a moment my feelings towards your home, and what influence must principally impel them? Am I so dull, or you so blind, Venetia? Can I not express, can you not discover how much, how ardently, how fondly, how devotedly, I—I—I—love you?"

"I am sure we always loved each other, Plantagenet."

"Yes! but not with this love; not as I love you now!"

Venetia stared.

"I thought we could not love each other more than we did, Plantagenet," at length she said. "Do you remember the jewel that you gave me? I always wore it until you seemed to forget us, and then I thought it looked so foolish! You remember what is inscribed on it:—'TO VENETIA, FROM HER AFFECTIONATE BROTHER, PLANTAGENET.' And as a brother I always loved you; had I indeed been your sister I could not have loved you more warmly and more truly."

"I am not your brother, Venetia; I wish not to be loved as a brother; and yet I must be loved by you, or I shall die."

"What then do you wish?" inquired Venetia, with great simplicity.

"I wish you to marry me," replied Lord Cadurcis.

"Marry!" exclaimed Venetia, with a face of wonder. "Marry! Marry you! Marry you, Plantagenet!"

"Ay! is that so wonderful? I love you, and if you love me, why should we not marry?"

Venetia was silent and looked upon the ground, not from agitation, for she was quite calm, but in thought; and then she said, "I never thought of marriage in my life, Plantagenet; I have no intention, no wish to marry; I mean to live always with mamma."

"And you shall always live with mamma, but that need not prevent you from marrying me," he replied. "Do not we all live together now? What will it signify if you dwell at Cadurcis and Lady Annabel at Cherbury? Is it not one home? But at any rate, this point shall not be an obstacle; for if it please you we will all live at Cherbury."

"You say that we are happy now, Plantagenet; oh! let us remain as we are."

"My own sweet girl, my sister, if you please, any title, so it be one of fondness, your sweet simplicity charms me; but believe me it cannot be as you wish; we cannot remain as we are unless we marry."

"Why not?"

"Because I shall be wretched and must live elsewhere, if indeed I can live at all."

"Oh! Plantagenet, indeed I thought you were my brother; when I found you after so long a separation as kind as in old days, and kinder still, I was so glad; I was so sure you loved me; I thought I had the kindest brother in the world. Let us not talk of any other love. It will, indeed it will, make mamma so miserable!"

"I am greatly mistaken," replied Lord Cadurcis, who saw no obstacles to his hopes in their conversation hitherto, "if on the contrary our union would not prove far from disagreeable to your mother, Venetia; I will say our mother, for indeed to me she has been one."

"Plantagenet," said Venetia, in a very earnest tone, "I love you very much; but, if you love me, press me on this subject no more at present. You have surprised, indeed you have bewildered me. There are thoughts, there are feelings, there are considerations, that must be respected, that must influence me. Nay! do not look so sorrowful, Plantagenet. Let us be happy now. To-morrow—only to-morrow—and to-morrow we are sure to meet, we will speak further of all this; but now—now—for a moment let us forget it, if we can forget anything so strange. Nay! you shall smile!"

He did. Who could resist that mild and winning glance! And indeed Lord Cadurcis was scarcely disappointed, and not at all mortified at his reception, or, as he esteemed it, the progress of his suit. The conduct of Venetia he attributed entirely to her unsophisticated nature and the timidity of a virgin soul. It made him prize even more dearly the treasure that he believed awaited him. Silent, then—though for a time they both struggled to speak on different subjects—silent, and almost content, Cadurcis proceeded, with the arm of Venetia locked in his and ever and anon unconsciously pressing it to his heart. The rosy twilight had faded away, the stars were stealing forth, and the moon again glittered. With a soul softer than the tinted shades of eve and glowing like the heavens, Cadurcis joined his companions as they entered the gardens of Cherbury. When they had arrived at home it seemed that exhaustion had suddenly succeeded all the excitement of the day. The Doctor, who was wearied, retired immediately. Lady Annabel pressed

Cadurcis to remain and take tea, or, at least, to ride home; but his lordship, protesting that he was not in the slightest degree fatigued, and anticipating their speedy union on the morrow, bade her good night, and pressing with fondness the hand of Venetia, retraced his steps to the now solitary abbey.

CHAPTER VII.

CADURCIS returned to the abbey, but not to slumber. That love of loneliness which had haunted him from his boyhood, and which ever asserted its sway when under the influence of his passions, came over him now with irresistible power. A day of enjoyment had terminated, and it left him melancholy. Hour after hour he paced the moon-lit cloisters of his abbey, where not a sound disturbed him, save the monotonous fall of the fountain, that seems by some inexplicable association always to blend with and never to disturb our feelings; gay when we are joyful, and sad amid our sorrow.

Yet was he sorrowful! He was gloomy, and fell into a reverie about himself, a subject to him ever perplexing and distressing. His conversation of the morning with Doctor Masham recurred to him. What did the Doctor mean by his character not being formed, and that he might yet live to change all his opinions? Character! what was character? It must be will; and his will was violent and firm. Young as he was, he had early habituated himself to reflection, and the result of his musings had been a desire to live away from the world with those he loved. The world, as other men viewed it, had no charms for him. Its pursuits and passions seemed to him on the whole paltry and faint. He could sympathise with great deeds, but not with bustling life. That which was common did not please him. He loved things that were rare and strange; and the spell that bound him so strongly to Venetia Herbert was her unusual life, and the singular circumstances of her destiny that were not unknown to him. True he was young: but, lord of himself, youth was associated with none of those mortifications which make the juvenile pant for manhood. Cadurcis valued his youth and treasured it. He could not conceive love, and the romantic life that love should lead, without the circumambient charm of youth adding fresh lustre to all that was bright and fair, and a keener relish to every combination of enjoyment. The moonbeam fell upon his mother's monument—a tablet on the cloister wall that recorded the birth and death of KATHERINE CADURCIS. His thoughts flew to his ancestry. They had conquered in France and Palestine, and

left a memorable name to the annalist of his country. Those days were past, and yet Cadureis felt within him the desire, perhaps the power, of emulating them; but what remained? What career was open in this mechanical age to the chivalric genius of his race? Was he misplaced then in life? The applause of nations—there was something grand and exciting in such a possession. To be the marvel of mankind what would he not hazard? Dreams, dreams! If his ancestors were valiant and celebrated it remained for him to rival, to excel them, at least in one respect. Their coronet had never rested on a brow fairer than the one for which he destined it. Venetia then, independently of his passionate love, was the only apparent object worth his pursuit—the only thing in this world that had realized his dreams—dreams sacred to his own musing soul, that even she had never shared or guessed. And she, she was to be his. He could not doubt it; but to-morrow would decide; to-morrow would seal his triumph.

His sleep was short and restless; he had almost outwatched the stars, and yet he rose with the early morn. His first thought was of Venetia; he was impatient for the interview—the interview she promised, and even proposed. The fresh air was grateful to him; he bounded along to Cherbury, and brushed the dew in his progress from the tall grass and shrubs. In sight of the hall, he for a moment paused. He was before his accustomed hour; and yet he was always too soon. Not to-day, though, not to-day; suddenly he rushes forward and springs down the green vista, for Venetia is on the terrace, and alone!

Always kind, this morning she greeted him with unusual affection. Never had she seemed to him so exquisitely beautiful. Perhaps her countenance to-day was more pale than wont. There seemed a softness in her eyes usually so brilliant and even dazzling; the accents of her salutation were suppressed and tender.

“I thought you would be here early,” she remarked, “and therefore I rose to meet you.”

Was he to infer from this artless confession that his image had haunted her in her dreams, or only that she would not delay the conversation on which his happiness depended? He could scarcely doubt which version to adopt when she took his arm and led him from the terrace to walk where they could not be disturbed.

“Dear Plantagenet,” she said—“for indeed you are very dear to me—I told you last night that I would speak to you to-day on your wishes, that are so kind to me and so much intended for my happiness. I do not love suspense; but indeed last night I was too much surprised, too much overcome by what occurred, that, exhausted as I naturally was by all our pleasure, I could not tell you what I wished; indeed I could not, dear Plantagenet.”

"My own Venetia!"

"So I hope you will always deem me; for I should be very unhappy if you did not love me, Plantagenet—more unhappy than I have even been these last two years; and I have been very unhappy, very unhappy indeed, Plantagenet."

"Unhappy! Venetia; my Venetia unhappy?"

"Listen! I will not weep. I can control my feelings. I have learnt to do this; it is very sad, and very different to what my life once was; but I can do it."

"You amaze me!"

Venetia sighed, and then resumed, but in a tone mournful and low, and yet to a degree firm.

"You have been away five years, Plantagenet."

"But you have pardoned that."

"I never blamed you; I had nothing to pardon. It was well for you to be away; and I rejoice your absence has been so profitable to you."

"But it was wicked to have been so silent."

"Oh! no, no, no. Such ideas never entered into my head, nor even mamma's. You were very young; you did as all would, as all must do. Harbour not such thoughts. Enough, you have returned and love us yet."

"Love! adore!"

"Five years are a long space of time, Plantagenet. Events will happen in five years, even at Cherbury. I told you I was changed."

"Yes!" said Lord Cadurcis, in a voice of some anxiety, with a scrutinizing eye.

"You left me a happy child; you find me a woman,—and a miserable one."

"Good God! Venetia, this suspense is awful. Be brief, I pray you. Has any one ——"

Venetia looked at him with an air of perplexity. She could not comprehend the idea that impelled his interruption.

"Go on," Lord Cadurcis added, after a short pause; "I am indeed all anxiety."

"You remember that Christmas which you passed at the hall and walking at night in the gallery, and——"

"Well! Your mother—I shall never forget it."

"You found her weeping when you were once at Marrinhurst. You told me of it."

"Ay! ay!"

"There is a wing of our house shut up. We often talked of it."

"Often, Venetia; it was a mystery."

"I have penetrated it," replied Venetia in a solemn tone "and never have I known what happiness is since."

"Yes, yes!" said Lord Cadureis, very pale, and in a whisper.

"Plantagenet, I have a father."

Lord Cadureis started, and for an instant his arm quitted Venetia's. At length he said in a gloomy voice, "I know it."

"Know it!" exclaimed Venetia with astonishment. "Who could have told you the secret?"

"It is no secret," replied Cadureis; "would that it were!"

"Would that it were! How strange you speak, how strange you look, Plantagenet! If it be no secret that I have a father, why this concealment then? I know that I am not the child of shame!" she added, after a moment's pause, with an air of pride. A tear stole down the cheek of Cadureis.

"Plantagenet! dear, good Plantagenet! my brother! my own brother!—see, I kneel to you; Venetia kneels to you! your own Venetia!—Venetia that you love! Oh! if you knew the load that is on my spirit bearing me down to a grave which I would almost welcome, you would speak to me; you would tell me all.—I have sighed for this; I have longed for this; I have prayed for this. To meet some one who would speak to me of my father—who had heard of him, who knew him—has been for years the only thought of my being, the only object for which I existed. And now, here comes Plantagenet, my brother! my own brother! and he knows all,—and he will tell me; yes, that he will; he will tell his Venetia all—all!"

"Is there not your mother?" said Lord Cadureis, in a broken tone.

"Forbidden, utterly forbidden. If I speak, they tell me her heart will break; and therefore mine is breaking."

"Have you no friend?"

"Are not you my friend?"

"Doctor Masham?"

"I have applied to him; he tells me that he lives, and then he shakes his head."

"You never saw your father; think not of him."

"Not think of him!" exclaimed Venetia, with extraordinary energy. "Of what else? For what do I live but to think of him? What object have I in life but to see him? I have seen him—once."

"Ah!"

"I know his form by heart, and yet it was but a shade. Oh! what a shade!—what a glorious, what an immortal shade! If gods were upon earth they would be like my father!"

"His deeds, at least, are not godlike," observed Lord Cadurcis dryly, and with some bitterness.

"I deny it!" said Venetia, her eyes sparkling with fire, her form dilated with enthusiasm, and involuntarily withdrawing her arm from her companion. Lord Cadurcis looked exceedingly astonished.

"You deny it!" he exclaimed. "And what should you know about it?"

"Nature whispers to me that nothing but what is grand and noble could be breathed by those lips, or fulfilled by that form."

"I am glad you have not read his works," said Lord Cadurcis, with increased bitterness. "As for his conduct, your mother is a living evidence of his honour, his generosity, and his virtue."

"My mother!" said Venetia, in a softened voice; "and yet he loved my mother!"

"She was his victim, as a thousand others may have been."

"She is his wife!" replied Venetia, with some anxiety.

"Yes, a deserted wife; is that preferable to being a cherished mistress? More honourable, but scarcely less humiliating."

"She must have misunderstood him," said Venetia. "I have perused the secret vows of his passion, I have read his praises of her beauty, I have pored over the music of his emotions when he first became a father;—yes, he has gazed on me—even though but for a moment—with love! Over me he has breathed forth the hallowed blessing of a parent! That transcendent form has pressed his lips to mine, and held me with fondness to his heart! And shall I credit aught to his dishonour? Is there a being in existence who can persuade me he is heartless or abandoned? No! I love him! I adore him! I am devoted to him with all the energies of my being! I live only on the memory that he lives, and were he to die, I should pray to my God that I might join him without delay in a world where it cannot be justice to separate a child from a father."

And this was Venetia!—the fair, the serene Venetia! the young, the inexperienced Venetia! pausing, as it were, on the parting threshold of girlhood, whom, but a few hours since, he had fancied could scarcely have proved a passion; who appeared to him barely to comprehend the meaning of his advances; for whose calmness or whose coldness he had consoled himself by the flattering conviction of her unknowing innocence. Before him stood a beautiful and inspired Maenad, her eye flashing supernatural fire, her form elevated above her accustomed stature, defiance on her swelling brow, and passion on her quivering lip!

Gentle and sensitive as Cadurcis ever appeared to those he loved, there was in his soul a deep and unfathomed well of passions that

had been never stirred, and a bitter and mocking spirit in his brain, of which he was himself unconscious. He had repaired this hopeful morn to Cherbury to receive, as he believed, the plighted faith of a simple and affectionate, perhaps grateful girl. That her unsophisticated and untutored spirit might not receive the advances of his heart with an equal and corresponding ardour, he was prepared. It pleased him that he should watch the gradual development of this bud of sweet affections, waiting, with proud anxiety, her fragrant and her full-blown love. But now it appeared that her coldness or her indifference might be ascribed to any other cause than the one to which he had attributed it,—the innocence of an inexperienced mind. This girl was no stranger to powerful passions; she could love, and love with fervency, with devotion, with enthusiasm. This child of joy was a woman of deep and thoughtful sorrows, brooding in solitude over high resolves and passionate aspirations. Why were not the emotions of such a tumultuous soul excited by himself? To him she was calm and imperturbable; she called him brother—she treated him as a child. But a picture, a fantastic shade, could raise in her a tempestuous swell of sentiment that transformed her whole mind, and changed the colour of all her hopes and thoughts. Deeply prejudiced against her father, Cadurcis now hated him, and with a fell and ferocious earnestness that few bosoms but his could prove. Pale with rage, he ground his teeth and watched her with a glance of sarcastic aversion.

“You led me here to listen to a communication which interested me,” he at length said; “have I heard it?”

His altered tone, the air of haughtiness which he assumed, were not lost upon Venetia. She endeavoured to collect herself, but she hesitated to reply.

“I repeat my inquiry,” said Cadurcis. “Have you brought me here only to inform me that you have a father, and that you adore him, or his picture?”

“I led you here,” replied Venetia, in a subdued tone, and looking on the ground, “to thank you for your love, and to confess to you that I love another.”

“Love another!” exclaimed Cadurcis, in a tone of derision. “Simpleton! The best thing your mother can do is to lock you up in the chamber with the picture that has produced such marvellous effects.”

“I am no simpleton, Plantagenet,” rejoined Venetia, very quietly, “but one who is acting as she thinks right; and not only as her mind, but as her heart prompts her.”

They had stopped in the earlier part of this conversation on a little plot of turf surrounded by shrubs; Cadurcis walked up and

down this area with angry steps, occasionally glancing at Venetia with a look of mortification and displeasure.

"I tell you, Venetia," he at length said, "that you are a little fool. What do you mean by saying that you cannot marry me because you love another? Is not that other, by your own account, your father? Love him as much as you like. Is that to prevent you from loving your husband also?"

"Plantagenet, you are rude, and unnecessarily so," said Venetia. "I repeat to you again, and for the last time, that all my heart is my father's. It would be wicked in me to marry you, because I cannot love you as a husband should be loved. I can never love you as I love my father. However, it is useless to talk upon this subject. I have not even the power of marrying you if I wished, for I have dedicated myself to my father in the name of God; and I have offered a vow, to be registered in heaven, that thenceforth I would exist only for the purpose of being restored to his heart."

"I congratulate you on your parent, Miss Herbert."

"I feel that I ought to be proud of him, though, alas! I can only feel it. But, whatever your opinion may be of my father, I beg you to remember that you are speaking to his child."

"I shall state my opinion respecting your father, madam, with the most perfect unreserve, wherever and whenever I choose; quite convinced that, however you esteem that opinion, it will not be widely different from the real sentiments of the only parent whom you ought to respect and whom you are bound to obey."

"And I can tell you, Sir, that whatever your opinion is on any subject it will never influence mine. If, indeed, I were the mistress of my own destiny—which I am not—it would have been equally out of my power to have acted as you have so singularly proposed. I do not wish to marry, and marry I never will; but were it in my power, or in accordance with my wish, to unite my fate for ever with another's, it should at least be with one to whom I could look up with reverence, and even with admiration. He should be at least a man, and a great man; one with whose name the world rung; perhaps like my father, a genius and a poet."

"A genius and a poet!" exclaimed Lord Cadurcis, in a fury, stamping with passion; "are these fit terms to use when speaking of the most abandoned profligate of his age?—A man whose name is synonymous with infamy, and which no one dares to breathe in civilised life;—whose very blood is pollution, as you will some day feel;—who has violated every tie, and derided every principle, by which society is maintained;—whose life is a living illustration of his own shameless doctrines; who is, at the same time, a traitor to his King and an apostate from his God!"

Curiosity, overpowering even indignation, had permitted Venetia to listen even to this tirade. Pale as her companion, but with a glance of withering scorn, she exclaimed, "Passionate and ill-mannered boy! words cannot express the disgust and the contempt with which you inspire me." She spoke and she disappeared. Cadureis was neither able nor desirous to arrest her flight. He remained rooted to the ground, muttering to himself the word "boy!" Suddenly raising his arm and looking up to the sky, he exclaimed, "The illusion is vanished! Farewell, Cherbury!—farewell, Cadureis!—a wider theatre awaits me! I have been too long the slave of soft affections!—I root them out of my heart for ever!" and, fitting the action to the phrase, it seemed that he hurled upon the earth all the tender emotions of his soul. "Woman! henceforth you shall be my sport! I have now no feeling but for myself. When she spoke I might have been a boy;—I am a boy no longer. What I shall do I know not; but this I know, the world shall ring with my name; I will be a man, and a great man!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE agitation of Venetia on her return was not unnoticed by her mother; but Lady Annabel ascribed it to a far different cause than the real one. She was rather surprised when the breakfast passed, and Lord Cadureis did not appear; somewhat perplexed when her daughter seized the earliest opportunity of retiring to her own chamber; but, with that self-restraint of which she was so complete a mistress, Lady Annabel uttered no remark.

Once more alone, Venetia could only repeat to herself the wild words that had burst from Plantagenet's lips in reference to her father. What could they mean? His morals might be misrepresented, his opinions might be misunderstood; stupidity might not comprehend his doctrines—malignity might torture them; the purest sages have been accused of immorality,—the most pious philosophers have been denounced as blasphemous: but, "a traitor to his King"—that was a tangible, an intelligible proposition,—one with which all might grapple,—which could be easily disproved if false, scarcely propounded were it not true. "False to his King!" How false? Where? When? What mystery involved her life? Unhappy girl! in vain she struggled with the overwhelming burden of her sorrows. Now she regretted that she had quarrelled with Cadureis; it was evident that he knew everything and would have told her all. And then she blamed him for his harsh and unfeeling demeanour, and his total want of sympathy with her cruel and per-

plexing situation. She had intended, she had struggled to be so kind to him; she thought she had such a plain tale to tell that he would have listened to it in considerate silence, and bowed to her necessary and inevitable decision without a murmur. Amid all these harassing emotions her mind tossed about like a ship without a rudder, until, in her despair, she almost resolved to confess everything to her mother, and to request her to soothe and enlighten her agitated and confounded mind. But what hope was there of solace or information from such a quarter? Lady Annabel's was not a mind to be diverted from her purpose. Whatever might have been the conduct of her husband, it was evident that Lady Annabel had traced out a course from which she had resolved not to depart. She remembered the earnest and repeated advice of Dr. Masham, that virtuous and intelligent man who never advised anything but for their benefit. How solemnly had he enjoined upon her never to speak to her mother upon the subject, unless she wished to produce misery and distress! And what could her mother tell her? Her father lived—he had abandoned her—he was looked upon as a criminal and shunned by the society whose laws and prejudices he had alike outraged. Why should she revive, amid the comparative happiness and serenity in which her mother now lived, the bitter recollection of the almost intolerable misfortune of her existence? No! Venetia was resolved to be a solitary victim. In spite of her passionate and romantic devotion to her father she loved her mother with perfect affection,—the mother who had dedicated her life to her child, and at least hoped she had spared her any share in their common unhappiness. And this father, whose image haunted her dreams,—whose unknown voice seemed sometimes to float to her quick ear upon the wind,—could he be that abandoned being that Cadurcis had described, and that all around her, and all the circumstances of her life, would seem to indicate? Alas! it might be truth; alas! it seemed like truth: and for one so lost, so utterly irredeemable, was she to murmur against that pure and benevolent parent who had cherished her with such devotion, and snatched her perhaps from disgrace, dishonour, and despair!

And Cadurcis,—would he return? With all his violence, the kind Cadurcis! Never did she need a brother more than now; and now he was absent, and she had parted with him in anger, deep, almost deadly: she, too, who had never before uttered a harsh word to a human being, who had been involved in only one quarrel in her life, and that almost unconsciously, and which had nearly broken her heart. She wept, bitterly she wept, this poor Venetia!

By one of those mental efforts which her strange lot often forced her to practise, Venetia at length composed herself, and re-

turned to the room where she believed she would meet her mother and hoped she should see Cadurcis. He was not there; but Lady Annabel was seated as calm and busied as usual; the Doctor had departed. Even his presence would have proved a relief, however slight, to Venetia, who dreaded at this moment to be alone with her mother. She had no cause, however, for alarm; Lord Cadurcis never appeared, and was absent even from dinner; the day died away, and still he was wanting; and at length Venetia bade her usual good night to Lady Annabel, and received her usual blessing and embrace without his name having been even mentioned.

Venetia passed a disturbed night, haunted by painful dreams, in which her father and Cadurcis were both mixed up, and with images of pain, confusion, disgrace, and misery; but the morrow, at least, did not prolong her suspense, for just as she had joined her mother at breakfast, Mistress Pouncefort, who had been despatched on some domestic mission by her mistress, entered with a face of wonder, and began as usual—"Only think, my lady; well to be sure, who would have thought it? I am quite confident for my own part I was quite taken aback when I heard it; and I could not have believed my ears, if John had not told me himself, and he had it from his lordship's own man."

"Well, Pouncefort, what have you to say?" inquired Lady Annabel, very calmly.

"And never to send no note, my lady; at least I have not seen one come up. That makes it so very strange."

"Makes what, Pouncefort?"

"Why, my lady, doesn't your la'ship know his lordship left the abbey yesterday and never said nothing to nobody; rode off without a word, by your leave or with your leave? To be sure he always was the oddest young gentleman as ever I met with; and, as I said to John; John, says I, I hope his lordship has not gone to join the gipsies again."

Venetia looked into a teacup, and then touched an egg, and then twirled a spoon; but Lady Annabel seemed quite imperturbable, and only observed, "Probably his guardian is ill and he has been suddenly summoned to town. I wish you would bring my knitting-needles, Pouncefort."

The autumn passed, and Lord Cadurcis never returned to the abbey and never wrote to any of his late companions. Lady Annabel never mentioned his name; and although she seemed to have no other object in life but the pleasure and happiness of her child, this strange mother never once consulted Venetia on the probable occasion of his sudden departure and his strange conduct.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

PARTY feeling perhaps never ran higher in England than during the period immediately subsequent to the expulsion of the Coalition Ministry. After the indefatigable faction of the American war, and the flagrant union with Lord North, the Whig party, and especially Charles Fox, then in the full vigour of his bold and ready mind, were stung to the quick that all their remorseless efforts to obtain and preserve the government of the country should terminate in the preferment and apparent permanent power of a mere boy.

Next to Charles Fox, perhaps the most eminent and influential member of the Whig party was Lady Monteagle. The daughter of one of the oldest and most powerful peers in the kingdom, possessing very lively talents and many fascinating accomplishments, the mistress of a great establishment, very beautiful, and, although she had been married some years, still young, the celebrated wife of Lord Monteagle found herself the centre of a circle alike powerful, brilliant, and refined. She was the Muse of the Whig party, at whose shrine every man of wit and fashion was proud to offer his flattering incense; and her house became not merely the favourite scene of their social pleasures, but the sacred temple of their political rites; here many a manœuvre was planned and many a scheme suggested; many a convert enrolled and many a votary initiated.

Reclining on a couch in a boudoir, which she was assured was the exact fac-simile of that of Marie Antoinette, Lady Monteagle, with an eye sparkling with excitement and a cheek flushed with emotion, appeared deeply interested in a volume, from which she raised her head as her husband entered the room.

"Gertrude, my love," said his lordship, "I have asked the new bishop to dine with us to-day."

"My dear Henry," replied her ladyship, "what could induce you to do anything so strange?"

"I suppose I have made a mistake, as usual," said his lordship, shrugging his shoulders, with a smile.

"My dear Henry, you know you may ask whoever you like to your house. I never find fault with what you do. But what could induce you to ask a Tory bishop to meet a dozen of our own people?"

"I thought I had done wrong directly I had asked him," rejoined his lordship; "and yet he would not have come if I had not made such a point of it. I think I will put him off."

"No, my love, that would be wrong; you cannot do that."

"I cannot think how it came into my head. The fact is, I lost my presence of mind. You know he was my tutor at Christchurch when poor dear Herbert and I were such friends, and very kind he was to us both; and so, the moment I saw him, I walked across the house, introduced myself, and asked him to dinner."

"Well, never mind," said Lady Monteagle, smiling. "It is rather ridiculous; but I hope nothing will be said to offend him."

"Oh! do not be alarmed about that: he is quite a man of the world, and, although he has his opinions, not at all a partisan. I assure you poor dear Herbert loved him to the last, and to this very moment has the greatest respect and affection for him."

"How very strange that not only your tutor, but Herbert's, should be a bishop," remarked the lady, smiling.

"It is very strange," said his lordship, "and it only shows that it is quite useless in this world to lay plans or reckon on anything. You know how it happened?"

"Not I, indeed; I have never given a thought to the business; I only remember being very vexed that that stupid old Bangerford should not have died when we were in office, and then, at any rate, we should have got another vote."

"Well, you know," said his lordship, "dear old Masham, that is his name, was at Weymouth this year; with whom do you think, of all people in the world?"

"How should I know? Why should I think about it, Henry?"

"Why, with Herbert's wife."

"What, that horrid woman!"

"Yes, Lady Annabel."

"And where was his daughter? Was she there?"

"Of course. She has grown up, and a most beautiful creature they say she is; exactly like her father."

"Ah! I shall always regret I never saw him," said her ladyship.

"Well, the daughter is in bad health; and so, after keeping her shut up all her life, the mother was obliged to take her to Weymouth; and Masham, who has a living in their neighbourhood, which, by-the-bye, Herbert gave him, and is their chaplain and counsellor, and friend of the family, and all that sort of thing, though I really believe he has always acted for the best, he was with them. Well, the King took the greatest fancy to these Herberts; and the Queen, too, quite singled them out; and, in short, they were always with the royal family. It ended by his Majesty

making Masham his chaplain; and now he has made him a bishop."

"Very droll indeed," said her ladyship; "and the drollest thing of all is, that he is now coming to dine here."

"Have you seen Cadurcis to-day?" said Lord Monteagle.

"Of course," said her ladyship.

"He dines here?"

"To be sure. I am reading his new poem; it will not be published till to-morrow."

"Is it good?"

"Good! What crude questions you do always ask, Henry!" exclaimed Lady Monteagle. "Good! Of course it is good. It is something better than good."

"But I mean is it as good as his other things? Will it make as much noise as his last thing?"

"Thing! Now, Henry, you know very well that if there be anything I dislike in the world, it is calling a poem a thing."

"Well, my dear, you know I am no judge of poetry. But if you are pleased, I am quite content. There is a knock. Some of your friends. I am off. I say, Gertrude, be kind to old Masham, that is a dear creature!"

Her ladyship extended her hand, to which his lordship pressed his lips, and just effected his escape as the servant announced a visitor, in the person of Mr. Horace Pole.

"Oh! my dear Mr. Pole, I am quite exhausted," said her ladyship; "I am reading Cadurcis' new poem; it will not be published till to-morrow, and it really has destroyed my nerves. I have got people to dinner to-day, and I am sure I shall not be able to encounter them."

"Something outrageous, I suppose," said Mr. Pole, with a sneer. "I wish Cadurcis would study Pope."

"Study Pope! My dear Mr. Pole, you have no imagination."

"No, I have not, thank Heaven," drawled out Mr. Pole.

"Well do not let us have a quarrel about Cadurcis," said Lady Monteagle. "All you men are jealous of him."

"And some of you women I think too," said Mr. Pole

Lady Monteagle faintly smiled.

"Poor Cadurcis!" she exclaimed; "he has a very hard life of it. He complains bitterly that so many women are in love with him. But then he is such an interesting creature, what can he expect?"

"Interesting!" exclaimed Mr. Pole. "Now I hold he is the most conceited, affected fellow that I ever met," he continued with unusual energy.

"Ah! you men do not understand him," said Lady Monteagle, shaking her head. "You cannot," she added, with a look of pity.

"I cannot, certainly," said Mr. Pole, "or his writings either. For my part I think the town has gone mad."

"Well, you must confess," said her ladyship, with a glance of triumph, "that it was very lucky for us that I made him a Whig."

"I cannot agree with you at all on that head," said Mr. Pole. "We certainly are not very popular at this moment, and I feel convinced that a connection with a person who attracts so much notice as Cadurcis unfortunately does, and whose opinions on morals and religion must be so offensive to the vast majority of the English public, must ultimately prove anything but advantageous to our party."

"Oh! my dear Mr. Pole," said her ladyship, in a tone of affected deprecation, "think what a genius he is!"

"We have very different ideas of genius, Lady Monteagle, I suspect," said her visitor.

"You cannot deny," replied her ladyship, rising from her recumbent posture, with some animation, "that he is a poet?"

"It is difficult to decide upon our contemporaries," said Mr. Pole dryly.

"Charles Fox thinks he is the greatest poet that ever existed," said her ladyship, as if she were determined to settle the question.

"Because he has written a lampoon on the royal family," rejoined Mr. Pole.

"You are a very provoking person," said Lady Monteagle; "but you do not provoke me; do not flatter yourself you do."

"That I feel to be an achievement alike beyond my power and my ambition," replied Mr. Pole, slightly bowing, but with a sneer.

"Well, read this," said Lady Monteagle, "and then decide upon the merits of Cadurcis."

Mr. Pole took the extended volume, but with no great willingness, and turned over a page or two and read a passage here and there.

"Much the same as his last effusion, I think," he observed, "as far as I can judge from so cursory a review. Exaggerated passion, bombastic language, egotism to excess, and, which perhaps is the only portion that is genuine, mixed with common-place scepticism and impossible morals, and a sort of vague, dreamy philosophy, which, if it mean anything, means atheism, borrowed from his idol, Herbert, and which he himself evidently does not comprehend."

"Monster!" exclaimed Lady Monteagle, with a mock assumption of indignation, "and you are going to dine with him here to-day. You do not deserve it."

"It is a reward which is unfortunately too often obtained by me," replied Mr. Pole. "One of the most annoying consequences

of your friend's popularity, Lady Monteagle, is that there is not a dinner party where one can escape him. I met him yesterday at Fanshawe's. He amused himself by eating only biscuits, and calling for soda water, while we quaffed our Burgundy. How very original! What a thing it is to be a great poet!"

"Perverse, provoking mortal!" exclaimed Lady Monteagle. "And on what should a poet live! On coarse food like you coarse mortals! Cadurcis is all spirit, and in my opinion his diet only makes him more interesting."

"I understand," said Mr. Pole, "that he cannot endure a woman to eat at all. But you are all spirit, Lady Monteagle, and therefore of course are not in the least inconvenienced. By-the-bye, do you mean to give us any of those charming little suppers this season?"

"I shall not invite you," replied her ladyship; "none but admirers of Lord Cadurcis enter this house."

"Your menace effects my instant conversion," replied Mr. Pole. "I will admire him as much as you desire, only do not insist upon my reading his works."

"I have not the slightest doubt you know them by heart," rejoined her ladyship.

Mr. Pole smiled, bowed, and disappeared; and Lady Monteagle sat down to write a billet to Lord Cadurcis, to entreat him to be with her at five o'clock, which was at least half an hour before the other guests were expected. The Monteagles were considered to dine ridiculously late.

CHAPTER II.

MARMION HERBERT, sprung from one of the most illustrious families in England, became at a very early age the inheritor of a great estate, to which, however, he did not succeed with the prejudices or opinions usually imbibed or professed by the class to which he belonged. While yet a boy Marmion Herbert afforded many indications of possessing a mind alike visionary and inquisitive, and both—although not in an equal degree—sceptical and creative. Nature had gifted him with very precocious talents; and with a temperament essentially poetic, he was nevertheless a great student. His early reading,—originally by accident and afterwards by an irresistible inclination,—had fallen among the works of the English freethinkers,—with all their errors, a profound and vigorous race, and much superior to the French philosophers, who were after all only their pupils and their imitators. While his juvenile studies, and in some degree the predisposition of his mind, had thus pre-

pared him to doubt and finally to challenge the propriety of all that was established and received, the poetical and stronger bias of his mind enabled him quickly to supply the place of everything he would remove and destroy; and far from being the victim of those frigid and indifferent feelings which must ever be the portion of the mere doubter, Herbert, on the contrary, looked forward with ardent and sanguine enthusiasm to a glorious and ameliorating future, which should amply compensate and console a misguided and unhappy race for the miserable past and the painful and dreary present. To those, therefore, who could not sympathize with his views, it will be seen that Herbert, in attempting to fulfil them, became not merely passively noxious from his example, but actively mischievous from his exertions. A mere sceptic, he would have been perhaps merely pitied; a sceptic with a peculiar faith of his own which he was resolved to promulgate, Herbert became odious. A solitary votary of obnoxious opinions, Herbert would have been looked upon only as a madman; but the moment he attempted to make proselytes he rose into a conspirator against society.

Young, irresistibly prepossessing in his appearance, with great eloquence, crude but considerable knowledge, an ardent imagination and a subtle mind, and a generous and passionate soul,—under any circumstances he must have obtained and exercised influence, even if his Creator had not also bestowed upon him a spirit of indomitable courage: but these great gifts of nature being combined with accidents of fortune scarcely less qualified to move mankind,—high rank, vast wealth, and a name of traditionary glory,—it will not be esteemed surprising that Marmion Herbert, at a very early period, should have attracted around him many enthusiastic disciples.

At Christchurch, whither he repaired at an unusually early age, his tutor was Doctor Masham; and the profound respect and singular affection with which that able, learned, and amiable man early inspired his pupil, for a time controlled the spirit of Herbert; or rather confined its workings to so limited a sphere that the results were neither dangerous to society nor himself. Perfectly comprehending and appreciating the genius of the youth entrusted to his charge, deeply interested in his spiritual as well as worldly welfare, and strongly impressed with the importance of enlisting his pupil's energies in favour of that existing order, both moral and religious, in the truth and indispensableness of which he was a sincere believer, Doctor Masham omitted no opportunity of combating the heresies of the young inquirer; and as the tutor, equally by talent, experience, and learning, was a competent champion of the great cause to which he was devoted, his zeal and ability for a time checked the development of those opinions of which

he witnessed the menacing influence over Herbert with so much fear and anxiety. The college life of Marmion Herbert, therefore, passed in ceaseless controversy with his tutor; and as he possessed, among many other noble qualities, a high and philosophic sense of justice, he did not consider himself authorized, while a doubt remained on his own mind, actively to promulgate those opinions, of the propriety and necessity of which he scarcely ever ceased to be persuaded. To this cause it must be mainly attributed that Herbert was not expelled the university; for had he pursued there the course of which his cruder career at Eton had given promise, there can be little doubt that some flagrant outrage of the opinions held sacred in that great seat of orthodoxy would have quickly removed him from the salutary sphere of their control.

Herbert quitted Oxford in his nineteenth year, yet inferior to few that he left there, even among the most eminent, in classical attainments, and with a mind naturally profound, practised in all the arts of ratiocination. His general knowledge also was considerable, and he was a proficient in those scientific pursuits which were then rare. Notwithstanding his great fortune and position, his departure from the university was not a signal with him for that abandonment to the world, and that unbounded self-enjoyment naturally so tempting to youth. On the contrary, Herbert shut himself up in his magnificent castle, devoted to solitude and study. In his splendid library he consulted the sages of antiquity, and conferred with them on the nature of existence and of the social duties; while in his laboratory or his dissecting-room he occasionally flattered himself he might discover the great secret which had perplexed generations. The consequence of a year passed in this severe discipline, was unfortunately a complete recurrence to those opinions that he had early imbibed, and which now seemed fixed in his conviction beyond the hope or chance of again faltering. In politics a violent republican, and an advocate—certainly a disinterested one—of a complete equality of property and conditions, utterly objecting to the very foundation of our moral system, and especially a strenuous antagonist of marriage, which he taught himself to esteem not only as a most unnatural tie, but as eminently unjust towards that softer sex, who had been so long the victims of man; discarding as a mockery the received revelation of the divine will; and, if no longer an atheist, substituting merely for such an outrageous dogma a subtle and shadowy Platonism; doctrines, however, which Herbert at least had acquired by a profound study of the works of their great founder; the pupil of Doctor Masham at length deemed himself qualified to enter that world which he was resolved to regenerate; prepared for persecution, and steeled even to martyrdom.

But while the doctrines of the philosopher had been forming, the spirit of the poet had not been inactive. Loneliness—after all, the best of Muses—had stimulated the creative faculty of his being. Wandering amid his solitary woods and glades at all hours and seasons, the wild and beautiful apparitions of nature had appealed to a sympathetic soul. The stars and winds, the pensive sunset and the sanguine break of morn, the sweet solemnity of night, the ancient trees and the light and evanescent flowers,—all signs and sights and sounds of loveliness and power,—fell on a ready eye and a responsive ear. Gazing on the beautiful, he longed to create it. Then it was that the two passions which seemed to share the being of Herbert appeared simultaneously to assert their sway, and he resolved to call in his Muse to the assistance of his Philosophy.

Herbert celebrated that fond world of his imagination, which he wished to teach men to love. In stanzas glittering with the most refined images, and resonant with the most subtle symphony, he called into creation that society of immaculate purity and unbounded enjoyment which he believed was the natural inheritance of unshackled man. In the hero he pictured a philosopher, young and gifted as himself: in the heroine, his idea of a perfect woman. Although all those peculiar doctrines of Herbert, which, undisguised, must have excited so much odium,—were more or less developed and inculcated in this work; nevertheless they were necessarily so veiled by the highly spiritual and metaphorical language of the poet, that it required some previous acquaintance with the system enforced, to be able to detect and recognise the esoteric spirit of his Muse. The public read only the history of an ideal world and of creatures of exquisite beauty, told in language that alike dazzled their fancy and captivated their ear. They were lost in a delicious maze of metaphor and music, and were proud to acknowledge an addition to the glorious catalogue of their poets in a young and interesting member of their aristocracy.

In the meanwhile Herbert entered that great world that had long expected him, and hailed his advent with triumph. How long might have elapsed before they were roused by the conduct of Herbert to the error under which they were labouring as to his character, it is not difficult to conjecture; but before he could commence those philanthropic exertions which apparently absorbed him, he encountered an individual who most unconsciously put his philosophy not merely to the test, but partially even to the rout; and this was Lady Annabel Sidney. Almost as new to the world as himself, and not less admired, her unrivalled beauty, her unusual accomplishments, and her pure and dignified mind—combined, it must be confessed, with the most flattering admiration of his genius—entirely captivated the philosophical antagonist of marriage. It

is not surprising that Marmion Herbert—scarcely of age, and with a heart of extreme susceptibility—resolved, after a struggle, to be the first exception to his system, and, as he faintly flattered himself, the last victim of prejudice. He wooed and won the Lady Annabel.

The marriage ceremony was performed by Doctor Masham, who had read his pupil's poem, and had been a little frightened by its indications; but this happy union had dissipated all his fears. He would not believe in any other than a future career for him alike honourable and happy; and he trusted that if any wild thoughts still lingered in Herbert's mind, that they would clear off by the same literary process; so that the utmost ill consequences of his immature opinions might be an occasional line that the wise would have liked to blot, and yet which the unlettered might scarcely be competent to comprehend. Mr. and Lady Annabel Herbert departed after the ceremony to his castle, and Doctor Masham to Marrinhurst, a valuable living in another county, to which his pupil had just presented him.

Some months after this memorable event, rumours reached the ear of the good Doctor that all was not as satisfactory as he could desire in that establishment, in the welfare of which he naturally took so lively an interest. Herbert was in the habit of corresponding with the rector of Marrinhurst, and his first letters were full of details as to his happy life and his perfect content; but gradually these details had been considerably abridged, and the correspondence assumed chiefly a literary or philosophical character. Lady Annabel, however, was always mentioned with regard, and an intimation had been duly given to the Doctor that she was in a delicate and promising situation, and that they were both alike anxious that he should christen their child. It did not seem very surprising to the good Doctor, who was a man of the world, that a husband, six months after marriage, should not speak of the memorable event with all the fulness and fondness of the honeymoon; and, being one of those happy tempers that always anticipate the best, he dismissed from his mind, as vain gossip and idle exaggerations, the ominous whispers that occasionally reached him.

Immediately after the Christmas ensuing his marriage, the Herberts returned to London, and the Doctor, who happened to be a short time in the metropolis, paid them a visit. His observations were far from unsatisfactory; it was certainly too evident that Marmion was no longer enamoured of Lady Annabel, but he treated her apparently with courtesy, and even cordiality. The presence of Doctor Masham tended, perhaps, a little to revive old feelings, for he was as much a favourite with the wife as with the husband; but on the whole, the Doctor quitted them with an easy

heart, and sanguine that the interesting and impending event would, in all probability, revive affection on the part of Herbert, or at least afford Lady Annabel the only substitute for a husband's heart.

In due time the Doctor heard from Herbert that his wife had gone down into the country; but was sorry to observe that Herbert did not accompany her. Even this disagreeable impression was removed by a letter, shortly after received from Herbert, dated from the castle, and written in high spirits, informing him that Annabel had made him the happy father of the most beautiful little girl in the world. During the ensuing three months Mr. Herbert, though he resumed his residence in London, paid frequent visits to the castle, where Lady Annabel remained; and his occasional correspondence, though couched in a careless vein, still on the whole indicated a cheerful spirit; though ever and anon were sarcastic observations as to the felicity of the married state, which, he said, was an undoubted blessing, as it kept a man out of all scrapes, though unfortunately under the penalty of his total idleness and inutility in life. On the whole, however, the reader may judge of the astonishment of Doctor Masham when, in common with the world, very shortly after the receipt of this letter—Mr. Herbert having previously proceeded to London, and awaiting, as was said, the daily arrival of his wife and child—his former tutor learned that Lady Annabel, accompanied only by Pauncefort and Venetia, had sought her father's roof; declaring that circumstances had occurred which rendered it quite impossible that she could live with Mr. Herbert any longer, and entreating his succour and parental protection.

Never was such a hubbub in the world! In vain Herbert claimed his wife, and expressed his astonishment; declaring that he had parted from her with the expression of perfect kind feeling on both sides. No answer was given to his letter, and no explanation of any kind conceded him. The world universally declared Lady Annabel an injured woman, and trusted that she would eventually have the good sense and kindness to gratify them by revealing the mystery; while Herbert on the contrary, was universally abused and shunned,—avoided by his acquaintances, and denounced as the most depraved of men.

In this extraordinary state of affairs Herbert acted in a manner the best calculated to secure his happiness, and the very worst to preserve his character. Having ostentatiously shown himself in every public place, and courted notice and inquiry by every means in his power, to prove that he was not anxious to conceal himself or avoid any inquiry, he left the country, free at last to pursue that career to which he had always aspired, and in which he had

been checked by a blunder, from the consequences of which he little expected that he should so speedily and strangely emancipate himself. It was in a beautiful villa on the lake of Geneva that he finally established himself, and there for many years he employed himself in the publication of a series of works, which, whether they were poetry or prose, imaginative or investigative, all tended to the same consistent purpose, namely, the fearless and unqualified promulgation of those opinions, on the adoption of which he sincerely believed the happiness of mankind depended; and the opposite principles to which, in his own case, had been productive of so much mortification and misery. His works, which were published in England, were little read, and universally decried. The critics were always hard at work, proving that he was no poet, and demonstrating in the most logical manner that he was quite incapable of reasoning on the commonest topic. In addition to all this, his ignorance was self-evident; and though he was very fond of quoting Greek they doubted whether he was capable of reading the original authors. The general impression of the English public, after the lapse of some years, was, that Herbert was an abandoned being, of the most profligate habits, opposed to all the institutions of society that kept his infamy in check, and an avowed atheist; and as scarcely any one but a sympathetic spirit ever read a line he wrote—for indeed the very sight of his works was pollution—it is not very wonderful that this opinion was so generally prevalent. A calm inquirer might, perhaps, have suspected that abandoned profligacy is not very compatible with severe study, and that an author is seldom loose in his life, even if he be licentious in his writings. A calm inquirer might, perhaps, have been of opinion that a solitary sage may be the antagonist of a priesthood without absolutely denying the existence of a God; but there never are calm inquirers. The world, on every subject, however unequally, is divided into parties; and even in the case of Herbert and his writings, those who admired his genius, and the generosity of his soul, were not content without advocating, principally out of pique to his adversaries, his extreme opinions on every subject—moral, political, and religious.

Besides, it must be confessed, there was another circumstance which was almost as fatal to Herbert's character in England as his loose and heretical opinions. The travelling English, during their visits to Geneva, found out that their countryman solaced or enlivened his solitude by unhallowed ties. It is a habit to which very young men, who are separated from or deserted by their wives, occasionally have recourse. Wrong, no doubt, as most things are, but it is to be hoped venial; at least in the case of any man who is not also an atheist. This unfortunate mistress of Herbert was

magnified into a seraglio; the most extraordinary tales of the voluptuous life of one who generally at his studies outwatched the stars, were rife in English society; and

“Hoary Marquises and stripling Dukes,”

who were either protecting opera dancers, or, still worse, making love to their neighbours' wives, either looked grave when the name of Herbert was mentioned in female society, or affectedly confused, as if they could a tale untold, if they were not convinced that the sense of propriety among all present was infinitely superior to their sense of curiosity.

The only person to whom Herbert communicated in England was Doctor Masham. He wrote to him immediately on his establishment at Geneva, in a calm yet sincere and serious tone, as if it were useless to dwell too fully on the past. Yet he declared, although now that it was all over he avowed his joy at the interposition of his destiny, and the opportunity which he at length possessed of pursuing the career for which he was adapted, that he had to his knowledge given his wife no cause of offence which could authorise her conduct. As for his daughter, he said he should not be so cruel as to tear her from her mother's breast; though, if anything could induce him to such behaviour, it would be the malignant and ungenerous menace of his wife's relatives, that they would oppose his preferred claim to the guardianship of his child, on the plea of his immoral life and atheistical opinions. With reference to pecuniary arrangements, as his chief seat was entailed on male heirs, he proposed that his wife should take up her abode at Cherbury, an estate which had been settled on her and her children at her marriage, and which, therefore, would descend to Venetia. Finally, he expressed his satisfaction that the neighbourhood of Marringhurst would permit his good and still faithful friend to cultivate the society and guard over the welfare of his wife and daughter.

During the first ten years of Herbert's exile, for such indeed it might be considered, the Doctor maintained with him a rare yet regular correspondence; but after that time a public event occurred, and a revolution took place in Herbert's life which terminated all communication between them; a termination occasioned, however, by such a simultaneous conviction of its absolute necessity, that it was not attended by any of those painful communications which are too often the harrowing forerunners of a formal disruption of ancient ties.

This event was the revolt of the American colonies; and this revolution in Herbert's career, his junction with the rebels against his native country. Doubtless it was not without a struggle, perhaps a pang, that Herbert resolved upon a line of conduct to which it must

assuredly have required the strongest throb of his cosmopolitan sympathy, and his amplest definition of philanthropy to have impelled him. But without any vindictive feelings towards England, for he ever professed and exercised charity towards his enemies, attributing their conduct entirely to their ignorance and prejudice, upon this step he nevertheless felt it his duty to decide. There seemed in the opening prospects of America, in a world still new, which had borrowed from the old as it were only so much civilisation as was necessary to create and to maintain order; there seemed in the circumstances of its boundless territory, and the total absence of feudal institutions and prejudices, so fair a field for the practical introduction of those regenerating principles to which Herbert had devoted all the thought and labour of his life, that he resolved, after long and perhaps painful meditation, to sacrifice every feeling and future interest to its fulfilment. All idea of ever returning to his native country, even were it only to mix his ashes with the generations of his ancestors; all hope of reconciliation with his wife, or of pressing to his heart that daughter, often present to his tender fancy, and to whose affections he had feelingly appealed in an outburst of passionate poetry—all these chances, chances which, in spite of his philosophy, had yet a lingering charm, must be discarded for ever. They were discarded. Assigning his estate to his heir upon conditions, in order to prevent its forfeiture, with such resources as he could command, and which were considerable, Marmion Herbert arrived at Boston, where his rank, his wealth, his distinguished name, his great talents, and his undoubted zeal for the cause of liberty, procured him an eminent and gratifying reception. He offered to raise a regiment for the republic, and the offer was accepted; and he was enrolled among the citizens. All this occurred about the time that the Cadurcis family first settled at the abbey, and this narrative will probably throw light upon several slight incidents which heretofore may have attracted the perplexed attention of the reader: such as the newspaper brought by Dr. Masham at the Christmas visit; the tears shed at a subsequent period at Marringhurst, when he related to her the last intelligence that had been received from America. For, indeed, it is impossible to express the misery and mortification which this last conduct of her husband occasioned Lady Annabel, brought up, as she had been, with feelings of romantic loyalty and unswerving patriotism. To be a traitor seemed the only blot that remained for his sullied scutcheon, and she had never dreamed of that. An infidel, a profligate, a deserter from his home, an apostate from his God! one infamy alone remained, and now he had attained it;—a traitor to his king! Why, every peasant would despise him!

General Herbert, however, for such he speedily became, at the

head of his division, soon arrested the attention, and commanded the respect, of Europe. To his exertions the successful result of the struggle was, in a great measure, attributed; and he received the thanks of the Congress, of which he became a member. His military and political reputation exercised a beneficial influence upon his literary fame. His works were reprinted in America, and translated into French, and published at Geneva and Basle, whence they were surreptitiously introduced into France. The Whigs, who had become very factious, and nearly revolutionary, during the American war, suddenly became proud of their countryman, whom a new world hailed as a deliverer, and Paris declared to be a great poet and an illustrious philosopher. His writings became fashionable, especially among the young; numerous editions of them appeared; and in time it was discovered that Herbert was now not only openly read, and enthusiastically admired, but had founded a school.

The struggle with America ceased about the time of Lord Cadurcis' last visit to Cherbury, when from his indignant lips Venetia first learnt the enormities of her father's career. Since that period some three years had elapsed until we introduced our readers to the boudoir of Lady Monteagle. During this period, among the Whigs and their partisans the literary fame of Herbert had arisen and become established. How they have passed in regard to Lady Annabel Herbert and her daughter, on the one hand, and Lord Cadurcis himself on the other, we will endeavour to ascertain in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III.

FROM the last departure of Lord Cadurcis from Cherbury, the health of Venetia again declined. The truth is, she brooded in solitude over her strange lot, until her nerves became relaxed by intense reverie and suppressed feeling. The attention of a mother so wrapt up in her child as Lady Annabel, was soon attracted to the increasing languor of our heroine, whose eye each day seemed to grow less bright, and her graceful form less lithe and active. No longer, fond of the sun and breeze as a beautiful bird, was Venetia seen, as heretofore, glancing in the garden, or bounding over the lawns; too often might she be found reclining on the couch, in spite of all the temptations of the spring; while her temper, once so singularly sweet that it seemed there was not in the world a word that could ruffle it, and which required so keenly and responded so

quickly to sympathy, became reserved, if not absolutely sullen, or at times even captious and fretful.

This change in the appearance and demeanour of her daughter filled Lady Annabel with anxiety and alarm. In vain she expressed to Venetia her conviction of her indisposition ; but Venetia, though her altered habits confirmed the suspicion, and authorised the inquiry of her parent, persisted ever in asserting that she had no ailment. Her old medical attendant was, however, consulted, and being perplexed with the case, he recommended change of air. Lady Annabel then consulted Dr. Masham, and he gave his opinion in favour of change of air for one reason ; and that was, that it would bring with it what he had long considered Venetia to stand in need of, and that was change of life.

Dr. Masham was right ; but then, to guide him in forming his judgment, he had the advantage of some psychological knowledge of the case, which, in a great degree, was a sealed book to the poor puzzled physician. We laugh very often at the errors of medical men ; but if we would only, when we consult them, have strength of mind enough to extend to them something better than a half-confidence, we might be cured the sooner. How often, when the unhappy disciple of Esculapius is perplexing himself about the state of our bodies, we might throw light upon his obscure labours by simply detailing to him the state of our minds !

The result of these consultations in the Herbert family was a final resolution on the part of Lady Annabel to quit Cherbury for a while. As the sea air was especially recommended to Venetia, and as Lady Annabel shrank with a morbid apprehension from society, to which nothing could persuade her she was not an object either of odium or impertinent curiosity, she finally resolved to visit Weymouth, then a very small and secluded watering-place, and whither she arrived and settled herself, it not being even the season when its few customary visitors were in the habit of gathering.

This residence at Weymouth quite repaid Lady Annabel for all the trouble of her new settlement, and for the change in her life, very painful to her confirmed habits, which she experienced in leaving, for the first time for such a long series of years, her old hall ; for the rose soon returned to the cheek of her daughter, and the western breezes, joined with the influence of the new objects that surrounded her, and especially of that ocean, and its strange and inexhaustible variety, on which she gazed for the first time, gradually, but surely, completed the restoration of Venetia to health, and with it to much of her old vivacity.

When Lady Annabel had resided about a year at Weymouth, in the society of which she had invariably made the indisposition of

Venetia a reason for not entering, a great revolution suddenly occurred at this little quiet watering-place; for it was fixed upon as the summer residence of the English court. The celebrated name, the distinguished appearance, and the secluded habits of Lady Annabel and her daughter, had rendered them the objects of very general interest. Occasionally they were met in a sea-side walk by some fellow-wanderer over the sands, or toiler over the shingles; and romantic reports of the dignity of the mother, and the daughter's beauty, were repeated by the fortunate observers to the lounging circle of the public library or the baths.

The moment that Lady Annabel was assured that the royal family had positively fixed upon Weymouth for their residence, and were even daily expected, she resolved instantly to retire. Her stern sense of duty assured her that it was neither delicate nor loyal to obtrude before the presence of an outraged monarch the wife and daughter of a traitor; her haughty, though wounded, spirit shrank from the revival of her husband's history, which must be the consequence of such a conjunction, and from the startling and painful remarks which might reach the shrouded ear of her daughter. With her characteristic decision, and with her usual stern volition, Lady Annabel quitted Weymouth instantly, but she was in some degree consoled for the regret and apprehensiveness which she felt at thus leaving a place that had otherwise so happily fulfilled all her hopes and wishes, and that seemed to agree so entirely with Venetia, by finding unexpectedly a marine villa, some few miles further up the coast, which was untenanted, and which offered to Lady Annabel all the accommodation she could desire.

It so happened this summer that Dr. Masham paid the Herberts a visit, and it was his habit occasionally to ride into Weymouth to read the newspaper, or pass an hour in that easy lounging chat, which is, perhaps, one of the principal diversions of a watering-place. A great dignitary of the church, who was about the King, and to whom Dr. Masham was known not merely by reputation, mentioned his presence to his Majesty; and the King, who was fond of the society of eminent divines, desired that Dr. Masham should be presented to him. Now, so favourable was the impression that the rector of Marringhurst made upon his sovereign, that from that moment the King was scarcely ever content unless he was in attendance. His Majesty, who was happy in asking questions, and much too acute to be baffled when he sought information, finally elicited from the Doctor, all that, in order to please Lady Annabel, he long struggled to conceal; but when the King found that the deserted wife and daughter of Herbert were really living in the neighbourhood, and that had they quitted Weymouth on his arrival, from a feeling of delicate loyalty, nothing would satisfy the

kind-hearted monarch but personally assuring them of the interest he took in their welfare ; and accordingly, the next day, without giving Lady Annabel even the preparation of a notice, his Majesty and his royal consort, attended only by a lord in waiting, called at the marine villa, and fairly introduced themselves.

An acquaintance, occasioned by a sentiment of generous and condescending sympathy, was established and strengthened into intimacy, by the personal qualities of those thus delicately honoured. The King and Queen were equally delighted with the wife and daughter of the terrible rebel ; and although, of course, not an allusion was made to his existence, Lady Annabel felt not the less acutely the cause to which she was indebted for a notice so gratifying, but which she afterwards ensured by her own merits. How strange are the accidents of life ! Venetia Herbert, who had been bred up in unbroken solitude, and whose converse had been confined to two or three beings, suddenly found herself the guest of a King, and the visitor to a court ! She stepped at once from solitude into the most august circle of society ; yet, though she had enjoyed none of that initiatory experience which is usually held so indispensable to the votaries of fashion, her happy nature qualified her to play her part without effort and with success. Serene and graceful, she mingled in the strange and novel scene, as if it had been for ever her lot to dazzle and to charm. Ere the royal family returned to London, they extracted from Lady Annabel a compliance with their earnest wishes, that she should fix her residence, during the ensuing season, in the metropolis, and that she should herself present Venetia at St. James's. The wishes of kings are commands ; and Lady Annabel, who thus unexpectedly perceived some of the most painful anticipations of her solitude at once dissipated, and that her child, instead of being subjected on her entrance into life to all the mortifications she had imagined, would, on the contrary, find her first introduction under auspices the most flattering and advantageous, bowed a dutiful assent to the condescending injunctions.

Such were the memorable consequences of this visit to Weymouth ! The return of Lady Annabel to the world, and her intended residence in the metropolis, while the good Masham preceded their arrival to receive a mitre. Strange events, and yet not improbable !

In the meantime, Lord Cadurcis had repaired to the university, where his rank and his eccentric qualities quickly gathered round him a choice circle of intimates, chiefly culled from his old school-fellows. Of these, the great majority were his seniors, for whose society the maturity of his mind qualified him. It so happened that these companions were in general influenced by those liberal opinions which had become in vogue during the American war, and

from which Lord Cadurcis had hitherto been preserved by the society in which he had previously mingled in the house of his guardian. With the characteristic caprice and impetuosity of youth, Cadurcis rapidly and ardently imbibed all these doctrines, captivated alike by their boldness and their novelty. Hitherto the child of prejudice, he flattered himself that he was now the creature of reason, and, determined to take nothing for granted, he soon learned to question everything that was received. A friend introduced him to the writings of Herbert,—that very Herbert whom he had been taught to look upon with so much terror and odium. Their perusal operated a complete revolution of his mind; and in little more than a year from his flight from Cherbury, he had become an enthusiastic votary of the great master, for his violent abuse of whom he had been banished from those happy bowers. The courage, the boldness, the eloquence, the imagination, the strange and romantic career of Herbert, carried the spirit of Cadurcis captive. The sympathetic companions studied his works and smiled with scorn at the prejudice of which their great model had been the victim, and of which they had been so long the dupes. As for Cadurcis, he resolved to emulate him, and he commenced his noble rivalry by a systematic neglect of all the duties and the studies of his college life. His irregular habits procured him constant reprimands in which he gloried; he revenged himself on the authorities by writing epigrams, and by keeping a bear, which he declared should stand for a fellowship. At length, having wilfully outraged the most important regulations, he was expelled; and he made his expulsion the subject of a satire equally personal and philosophic, and which obtained applause for the great talent which it displayed, even from those who lamented its want of judgment and the misconduct of its writer. Flushed with success, Cadurcis at length found, to his astonishment, that Nature had intended him for a poet. He repaired to London, where he was received with open arms by the Whigs, whose party he immediately embraced, and where he published a poem, in which he painted his own character as the hero, and of which—in spite of all the exaggeration and extravagance of youth—the genius was undeniable. Society sympathised with a young and a noble poet; his poem was read by all parties with enthusiasm; Cadurcis became the fashion. To use his own expression, “One morning he awoke, and found himself famous.” Young, singularly handsome, with every gift of nature and fortune, and with an inordinate vanity that raged in his soul, Cadurcis soon forgot the high philosophy that had for a moment attracted him, and delivered himself up to the absorbing egotism which had ever been latent in his passionate and ambitious mind. Gifted with energies that few have ever equalled, and fooled to the

bent by the excited sympathies of society, he poured forth his creative and daring spirit, with a license that conquered all obstacles from the very audacity with which he assailed them. In a word, the young, the reserved, and unknown Cadurcis—who, but three years back, was to have lived in the domestic solitude for which he alone felt himself fitted—filled every heart and glittered in every eye. The men envied, the women loved, all admired him. His life was a perpetual triumph; a brilliant and applauding stage, on which he ever played a dazzling and heroic part. So sudden and so startling had been his apparition, so vigorous and unceasing the efforts by which he had maintained his first overwhelming impression, and not merely by his writings, but by his unusual manners, and eccentric life, that no one had yet found time to draw his breath, to observe, to inquire, and to criticise. He had risen, and still flamed, like a comet; as wild as it was beautiful, and strange as it was brilliant.

CHAPTER IV.

WE must now return to the dinner party at Lord Monteagle's. When the Bishop of — entered the room, he found nearly all the expected guests assembled, and was immediately presented by his host to the lady of the house, who received him with all that fascinating address for which she was celebrated, expressing the extreme delight which she felt at thus becoming formally acquainted with one whom her husband had long taught her to admire and reverence. Utterly unconscious who had just joined the circle, while Lord Monteagle was introducing his newly-arrived guest to many present, and to all of whom he was unknown except by reputation, Lord Cadurcis was standing apart, apparently wrapt in his own thoughts; but the truth is, in spite of all the excitement in which he lived, he had difficulty in overcoming the natural reserve of his disposition.

"Watch Cadurcis," said Mr. Horace Pole to a very fine lady. "Does not he look sublime?"

"Show me him," said the lady, very eagerly; "I have never seen him yet; I am actually dying to know him. You know we have just come to town."

"And have caught the raging epidemic, I see," said Mr. Pole, with a sneer. "However, there is the marvellous young gentleman! 'Alone in a crowd,' as he says in his last poem. Very interesting!"

"Wonderful creature!" exclaimed the dame.

"Charming!" said Mr. Pole. "If you ask Lady Monteagle, she will introduce him to you, and then, perhaps, you will be fortunate enough to be handed to dinner by him."

"Oh! how I should like it!"

"You must take care, however, not to eat; he cannot endure a woman who eats."

"I never do," said the lady, very simply; "at least at dinner."

"Ah! then you will quite suit him; I dare say he will write a sonnet to you, and call you *Thyrza*."

"I wish I could get him to write some lines in my book," said the lady; "Charles Fox has written some; he was staying with us in the autumn, and he has written an ode to my little dog."

"How very amiable!" said Mr. Pole; "I dare say they are as good as his elegy on Mrs. Crew's cat. But you must not talk of cats and dogs to Cadureis. He is too exalted to commemorate any animal less sublime than a tiger or a barb."

"You forget his beautiful lines on his Newfoundland," said the lady.

"Very complimentary to us all," said Mr. Horace Pole. "The interesting misanthrope!"

"He looks very unhappy."

"Very," said Mr. Pole. "Evidently something on his conscience."

"They do whisper very odd things," said the lady, with great curiosity. "Do you think there is anything in them?"

"Oh! no doubt," said Mr. Pole; "look at him; you can detect crime in every glance."

"Dear me, how shocking! I think he must be the most interesting person that ever lived. I should so like to know him! They say he is so very odd."

"Very," said Mr. Pole. "He must be a man of genius; he is so unlike everybody; the very tie of his cravat proves it. And his hair, so savage and dishevelled; none but a man of genius would not wear powder. Watch him to-day, and you will observe that he will not condescend to perform the slightest act like an ordinary mortal. I met him at dinner yesterday at Fanshawe's, and he touched nothing but biscuits and soda-water. Fanshawe, you know, is famous for his cook. Very complimentary and gratifying, was it not?"

"Dear me!" said the lady, "I am delighted to see him; and yet I hope I shall not sit by him at dinner. I am quite afraid of him."

"He is really very awful!" said Mr. Pole.

In the meantime, the subject of these observations slowly withdrew to the further end of the saloon, apart from every one, and

threw himself upon a couch with a somewhat discontented air. Lady Monteagle, whose eye had never left him for a moment, although her attentions had been necessarily commanded by her guests, and who dreaded the silent rages in which Cadurcis constantly indulged, and which, when once assumed for the day, were with great difficulty dissipated, seized the first opportunity to join and soothe him.

"Dear Cadurcis," she said, "why do you sit here? You know I am obliged to speak to all these odious people, and it is very cruel of you."

"You seemed to me to be extremely happy," replied his lordship, in a sarcastic tone.

"Now, Cadurcis, for Heaven's sake do not play with my feelings," exclaimed Lady Monteagle, in a deprecating tone. "Pray be amiable. If I think you are in one of your dark humours, it is quite impossible for me to attend to these people; and you know it is the only point on which Monteagle ever has an opinion; he insists upon my attending to his guests."

"If you prefer his guests to me, attend to them."

"Now, Cadurcis! I ask you as a favour, a favour to me, only for to-day. Be kind, be amiable, you can if you like; no person can be more amiable; now, do!"

"I am very amiable," said his lordship; "I am perfectly satisfied, if you are. You made me dine here."

"Now, Cadurcis!"

"Have I not dined here to satisfy you?"

"Yes! It was very kind."

"But, really, that I should be wearied with all the common-places of these creatures who come to eat your husband's cutlets, is too much," said his lordship. "And you, Gertrude, what necessity can there be in your troubling yourself to amuse people whom you meet every day of your life, and who, from the vulgar perversity of society, value you in exact proportion as you neglect them?"

"Yes, but to-day I must be attentive; for Henry, with his usual thoughtlessness, has asked this new bishop to dine with us."

"The Bishop of ——?" inquired Lord Cadurcis, eagerly. "Is he coming?"

"He has been in the room this quarter of an hour."

"What, Masham! Doctor Masham!" continued Lord Cadurcis.

"Assuredly."

Lord Cadurcis changed colour, and even sighed. He rose rather quickly, and said, "I must go and speak to him."

So, quitting Lady Monteagle, he crossed the room, and with all the simplicity of old days, which instantly returned on him, those

melancholy eyes sparkling with animation, and that languid form quick with excitement, he caught the Doctor's glance, and shook his extended hand with a heartiness which astonished the surrounding spectators, accustomed to the elaborate listlessness of his usual manner.

"My dear Doctor! my dear Lord! I am glad to say," said Cadureis, "this is the greatest and the most unexpected pleasure I ever received. Of all persons in the world, you are the one whom I was most anxious to meet."

The good Bishop appeared not less gratified with the rencounter than Cadureis himself; but, in the midst of their mutual congratulations, dinner was announced and served; and in due order, Lord Cadureis found himself attending that very fine lady, whom Mr. Horace Pole had, in jest, suggested should be the object of his services; while Mr. Pole himself was seated opposite to him at table.

The lady, remembering all Mr. Pole's intimations, was really very much frightened; she at first could scarcely reply to the casual observations of her neighbour, and quite resolved not to eat anything. But his lively and voluble conversation, his perfectly unaffected manner, and the nonchalance with which he helped himself to every dish that was offered him, soon reassured her. Her voice became a little firmer, her manner less embarrassed, and she even began meditating a delicate assault upon a fricassee.

"Are you going to Ranelagh to-night?" inquired Lord Cadureis; "I think I shall take a round. There is nothing like amusement; it is the only thing worth living for; and I thank my destiny I am easily amused. We must persuade Lady Monteagle to go with us. Let us make a party, and return and sup. I like a supper; nothing in the world more charming than a supper—

‘A lobster salad, and champagne and chat.’

That is life, and very delightful. Why, really, my dear madam, you eat nothing. You will never be able to endure the fatigues of a Ranelagh campaign on the sustenance of a pâté. Pole, my good fellow, will you take a glass of wine? We had a pleasant party yesterday at Fanshawe's, and apparently a capital dinner. I was sorry that I could not play my part; but I have led rather a raking life lately. We must go and dine with him again."

Lord Cadureis' neighbour and Mr. Pole exchanged looks; and the lady, emboldened by the unexpected conduct of her cavalier, and the exceeding good friends which he seemed resolved to be with her and every one else, began to flatter herself that she might yet obtain the much-desired inscription in her volume. So, after making

the usual approaches, of having a great favour to request, which, however, she could not flatter herself would be granted, and which she even was afraid to mention; encouraged by the ready declaration of Lord Cadureis, that he should think it would be quite impossible for any one to deny her anything, the lady ventured to state, that Mr. Fox had written something in her book, and she should be the most honoured and happiest lady in the land if——”

“Oh! I shall be most happy,” said Lord Cadureis; “I really esteem your request quite an honour: you know I am only a literary amateur, and cannot pretend to vie with your real authors. If you want them, you must go to Mrs. Montagu. I would not write a line for her, and so the blues have quite excommunicated me. Never mind; I leave them to Miss Hannah More: but you—you are quite a different sort of person. What shall I write?”

“I must leave the subject to you,” said his gratified friend.

“Well, then,” said his lordship, “I dare say you have got a lap-dog or a broken fan; I don’t think I could soar above them. I think that is about my tether.”

This lady, though a very great person, was not a beauty, and very little of a wit, and not calculated in any respect to excite the jealousy of Lady Monteagle. In the meantime that lady was quite delighted with the unusual animation of Lord Cadureis, who was much the most entertaining member of the party. Every one present would circulate throughout the world that it was only at the Monteagles’ that Lord Cadureis condescended to be amusing. As the Bishop was seated on her right hand, Lady Monteagle seized the opportunity of making inquiries as to their acquaintance; but she only obtained from the good Masham that he had once resided in his lordship’s neighbourhood, and had known him as a child, and was greatly attached to him. Her ladyship was anxious to obtain some juvenile anecdotes of her hero; but the Bishop contrived to be amusing without degenerating into gossip. She did not glean much, except that all his early friends were more astonished at his present career than the Bishop himself, who was about to add, that he always had some misgivings, but, recollecting where he was, he converted the word into a more gracious term. But if Lady Monteagle were not so successful as she could wish in her inquiries, she contrived still to speak on the, to her, ever-interesting subject, and consoled herself by the communications which she poured into a guarded yet not unwilling ear, respecting the present life and conduct of the Bishop’s former pupil. The worthy dignitary had been prepared by public fame for much that was dazzling and eccentric; but it must be confessed he was not a little astonished by a great deal to which he listened. One thing, however, was clear,—that whatever might be the demeanour of Cadureis to the

circle in which he now moved, time, and the strange revolutions of his life, had not affected his carriage to his old friend. It gratified the Bishop while he listened to Lady Monteagle's details of the haughty, reserved, and melancholy demeanour of Cadureis, which impressed every one with an idea that some superior being had, as a punishment, been obliged to visit their humble globe, to recall the apparently heartfelt cordiality with which he had resumed his old acquaintance with the former rector of Marringhurst.

And indeed, to speak truth, the amiable and unpretending behaviour of Cadureis this day was entirely attributable to the unexpected meeting with this old friend. In the hurry of society he could scarcely dwell upon the associations which it was calculated to call up; yet more than once he found himself quite absent, dwelling on sweet recollections of that Cherbury that he had so loved. And ever and anon the tones of a familiar voice caught his ear, so that they almost made him start: they were not the less striking, because, as Masham was seated on the same side of the table as Cadureis, his eye had not become habituated to the Bishop's presence, which sometimes he almost doubted.

He seized the first opportunity after dinner of engaging his old tutor in conversation. He took him affectionately by the arm, and led him, as if unintentionally, to a sofa apart from the rest of the company, and seated himself by his side. Cadureis was agitated, for he was about to inquire of some whom he could not mention without emotion.

"Is it long since you have seen our friends?" said his lordship, "if indeed I may call them mine."

"Lady Annabel Herbert?" said the Bishop.

Cadureis bowed.

"I parted from her about two months back," continued the Bishop.

"And Cherbury, dear Cherbury, is it unchanged?"

"They have not resided there for more than two years."

"Indeed!"

"They have lived, of late, at Weymouth, for the benefit of the sea air."

"I hope neither Lady Annabel nor her daughter needs it?" said Lord Cadureis, in a tone of great feeling.

"Neither now, God be praised," replied Masham; "but Miss Herbert has been a great invalid."

There was a rather awkward silence. At length Lord Cadureis said, "We meet rather unexpectedly, my dear sir."

"Why, you have become a great man," said the Bishop, with a smile; "and one must expect to meet you."

"Ah! my dear friend," exclaimed Lord Cadureis, with a sigh,

"I would willingly give a whole existence of a life like this for one year of happiness at Cherbury."

"Nay!" said the Bishop, with a look of good-natured mockery, "this melancholy is all very well in poetry; but I always half suspected, and I am quite sure now, that Cherbury was not particularly adapted to you."

"You mistake me," said Cadurcis, mournfully shaking his head.

"Hitherto I have not been so very wrong in my judgment respecting Cadurcis, that I am inclined very easily to give up my opinion," replied the Bishop.

"I have often thought of the conversation to which you allude," replied Lord Cadurcis; "nevertheless, there is one opinion I never changed, one sentiment that still reigns paramount in my heart."

"You think so," said his companion; "but, perhaps, were it more than a sentiment, it would cease to flourish."

"No," said Lord Cadurcis firmly, "the only circumstance in the world of which I venture to feel certain is my love for Venetia."

"It raged certainly during your last visit to Cherbury," said the Bishop, "after an interval of five years; it has been revived slightly to-day, after an interval of three more, by the sight of a mutual acquaintance, who has reminded you of her. But what have been your feelings in the meantime? Confess the truth, and admit you have very rarely spared a thought to the person to whom you fancy yourself at this moment so passionately devoted."

"You do not do me justice," said Lord Cadurcis; "you are prejudiced against me."

"Nay! prejudice is not my humour, my good Lord. I decide only from what I myself observe; I give my opinion to you at this moment as freely as I did when you last conversed with me at the abbey, and when I a little displeased you by speaking what you will acknowledge has since turned out to be the truth."

"You mean, then, to say," said his lordship, with some excitement, "that you do not believe that I love Venetia?"

"I think you do, at this moment, very much," replied Masham; "and I think," he continued, smiling, "that you may probably continue very much in love with her, even during the rest of the week."

"You mock me!"

"Nay! I am most sincerely serious."

"What, then, do you mean?"

"I mean that your imagination, my Lord, dwelling for the moment with great power upon the idea of Venetia, becomes inflamed, and your whole mind is filled with her image."

"A metaphysical description of being in love," said Lord Cadurcis, rather dryly.

"Nay!" said Masham, "I think the heart has something to do with that."

"But the imagination acts upon the heart," rejoined his companion.

"But it is in the nature of its influence not to endure. At this moment, I repeat, your lordship may perhaps love Miss Herbert; you may go home and muse over her memory, and even deplore in passionate verses your misery in being separated from her; but in the course of a few days she will be again forgotten."

"But were she mine?" urged Lord Cadurcis, eagerly.

"Why, you would probably part from her in a year, as her father parted from Lady Annabel."

"Impossible! for my imagination could not conceive anything more exquisite than she is."

"Then it would conceive something less exquisite," said the Bishop. "It is a restless quality, and is ever creative, either of good or of evil."

"Ah! my dear Doctor—excuse me for again calling you Doctor, it is so natural," said Cadurcis, in a tone of affection.

"Call me what you will, my dear Lord," said the good Bishop, whose heart was moved; "I can never forget old days."

"Believe me, then," continued Cadurcis, "that you misjudge me in respect of Venetia. I feel assured that, had we married three years ago, I should have been a much happier man."

"Why, you have everything to make you happy," said the Bishop; "if you are not happy, who should be? You are young, and you are famous: all that is now wanted is to be wise."

Lord Cadurcis shrugged his shoulders. "I am tired of this life," he said; "I am wearied of the same hollow bustle, and the same false glitter day after day. Ah! my dear friend, when I remember the happy hours when I used to roam through the woods of Cherbury with Venetia, and ramble in that delicious park—both young, both innocent—lit by the sunset and guided by the stars; and then remember that it has all ended in this, and that this is success, glory, fame, or whatever be the proper title to baptize the bubble, the burthen of existence is too great for me."

"Hush, hush!" said his friend, rising from the sofa; "you will be happy if you be wise."

"But what is wisdom?" said Lord Cadurcis.

"One quality of it, in your situation, my Lord, is to keep your head as calm as you can. Now. I must bid you good night."

The Bishop disappeared, and Lord Cadurcis was immediately surrounded by several fine ladies, who were encouraged by the flattering bulletin that his neighbour at dinner, who was among

them, had given of his lordship's temper. They were rather disappointed to find him sullen, sarcastic, and even morose. As for going to Ranelagh, he declared that, if he had the power of awarding the punishment of his bitterest enemy, it would be to consign him for an hour to the barbarous infliction of a promenade in that temple of ennui; and as for the owner of the album, who, anxious about her verses, ventured to express a hope that his lordship would call upon her, the contemptuous bard gave her what he was in the habit of styling "a look," and quitted the room, without deigning otherwise to acknowledge her hopes and her courtesy.

CHAPTER V.

WE must now return to our friends the Herberts, who, having quitted Weymouth, without even revisiting Cherbury, are now on their journey to the metropolis. It was not without considerable emotion that Lady Annabel, after an absence of nearly nineteen years, contemplated her return to the scene of some of the most extraordinary and painful occurrences of her life. As for Venetia, who knew nothing of towns and cities, save from the hasty observations she had made in travelling, the idea of London, formed only from books and her imagination, was invested with even awful attributes. Mistress Pauncefort alone looked forward to their future residence simply with feelings of self-congratulation at her return, after so long an interval, to the theatre of former triumphs and pleasures, and where she conceived herself so eminently qualified to shine and to enjoy.

The travellers entered town towards nightfall, by Hyde Park Corner, and proceeded to an hotel in St. James's Street, where Lady Annabel's man of business had engaged them apartments. London, with its pallid parish lamps, scattered at long intervals, would have presented but a gloomy appearance to the modern eye, habituated to all the splendour of gas; but to Venetia it seemed difficult to conceive a scene of more brilliant bustle; and she leant back in the carriage, distracted with the lights and the confusion of the crowded streets. When they were once safely lodged in their new residence, the tumult of unpacking the carriages had subsided, and the ceaseless tongue of Pauncefort had in some degree refrained from its wearying and worrying chatter, a feeling of loneliness, after all this agitation and excitement, simultaneously came over the feelings of both mother and daughter, though they alike repressed its expression. Lady Annabel was lost in many sad

thoughts, and Venetia felt mournful, though she could scarcely define the cause. Both were silent, and they soon sought refuge from fatigue and melancholy in sleep.

The next morning, it being now April, was fortunately bright and clear. It certainly was a happy fortune that the fair Venetia was not greeted with a fog. She rose refreshed and cheerful, and joined her mother, who was, however, not a little agitated by an impending visit, of which Venetia had been long apprised. This was from Lady Annabel's brother, the former ambassador, who had of late returned to his native country. The brother and sister had been warmly attached in youth, but the awful interval of time that had elapsed since they parted, filled Venetia's mother with many sad and serious reflections. The Earl and his family had been duly informed of Lady Annabel's visit to the metropolis, and had hastened to offer her the hospitality of their home; but the offer had been declined, with feelings, however, not a little gratified by the earnestness with which it had been proffered.

Venetia was now, for the first time in her life, to see a relative. The anticipated meeting excited in her mind rather curiosity than sentiment. She could not share the agitation of her mother, and yet she looked forward to the arrival of her uncle with extreme inquisitiveness. She was not long kept in suspense. Their breakfast was scarcely finished, when he was announced. Lady Annabel turned rather pale; and Venetia, who felt herself as it were a stranger to her blood, would have retired, had not her mother requested her to remain; so she only withdrew to the back of the apartment.

Her uncle was ten years the senior of his sister, but not unlike her. Tall, graceful, with those bland and sympathising manners that easily win hearts, he entered the room with a smile of affection, yet with a composure of deportment that expressed at the same time how sincerely delighted he was at the meeting, and how considerably determined, at the same time, not to indulge in a scene. He embraced his sister with tenderness, assured her that she looked as young as ever, softly chided her for not making his house her home, and hoped that they should never part again; and he then turned to his niece. A fine observer, one less interested in the scene than the only witnesses, might have detected in the Earl, notwithstanding his experienced breeding, no ordinary surprise and gratification at the sight of the individual whose relationship he was now to claim for the first time.

"I must claim an uncle's privilege," he said, in a tone of great sweetness and some emotion, as he pressed with his own the beautiful lips of Venetia. "I ought to be proud of my niece. Why!

Annabel, if only for the honour of our family, you should not have kept this jewel so long enshrined in the casket of Cherbury."

The Earl remained with them some hours; and his visit was really prolonged by the unexpected pleasure which he found in the society of his relations. He would not leave them until they promised to dine with him that day, and mentioned that he had prevented his wife from calling with him that morning, because he thought, after so long a separation, it might be better to meet thus quietly. Then they parted with affectionate cordiality on both sides; the Earl enchanted to find delightful companions where he was half afraid he might only meet tiresome relatives; Lady Annabel proud of her brother, and gratified by his kindness; and Venetia anxious to ascertain whether all her relations were as charming as her uncle.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Lady Annabel and her daughter returned from their morning drive, they found the visiting ticket of the Countess on the table, who had also left a note, with which she had provided herself in case she was not so fortunate as to meet her relations. The note was very affectionate, and expressed the great delight of the writer at again meeting her dear sister and forming an acquaintance with her charming niece.

"More relations!" said Venetia, with a somewhat droll expression of countenance.

At this moment the Bishop of —, who had already called twice upon them unsuccessfully, entered the room. The sight of this old and dear friend gave great joy. He came to engage them to dine with him the next day, having already ineffectually endeavoured to obtain them for permanent guests. They sat chatting so long with him, that they were obliged at last to bid him an abrupt adieu, and hasten and make their toilettes for their dinner.

Their hostess received her relations with a warmth which her husband's praises of her sister-in-law and niece had originally prompted, but which their appearance and manners instantly confirmed. As all the Earl's children were married, their party consisted to-day only of themselves; but it was a very happy and agreeable meeting, for every one was desirous of being amiable. To be sure they had not many recollections or associations in common, and no one recurred to the past; but London, and the history of its fleeting hours, was an inexhaustible source of amusing conversation; and the Countess seemed resolved that Venetia

should have a very brilliant season ; that she should be very much amused and very much admired. Lady Annabel, however, put in a plea for moderation, at least until Venetia was presented ; but that the Countess declared must be at the next drawing-room. which was early in the ensuing week. Venetia listened to glittering narratives of balls and routs, operas and theatres, breakfasts and masquerades, Ranelagh and the Pantheon, with the same smiling composure as if she had been accustomed to them all her life, instead of having been shut up in a garden, with no livelier or brighter companions than birds and flowers.

After dinner, as her aunt and uncle and Lady Annabel sat round the fire, talking of her maternal grandfather, a subject which did not at all interest her, Venetia stole from her chair to a table in a distant part of the room, and turned over some books and music that were lying upon it. Among these was a literary journal, which she touched almost by accident, and which opened, with the name of Lord Cadurcis on the top of its page. This, of course, instantly attracted her attention. Her eye passed hastily over some sentences which greatly astonished her, and, extending her arm for a chair without quitting the book, she was soon deeply absorbed by the marvels which rapidly unfolded themselves to her. The article in question was an elaborate criticism as well of the career as the works of the noble poet ; for, indeed, as Venetia now learnt, they were inseparably blended. She gathered from these pages a faint and hasty yet not altogether unfaithful conception of the strange revolution that had occurred in the character, pursuits, and position of her former companion. In that mighty metropolis, whose wealth and luxury and power had that morning so vividly impressed themselves upon her consciousness, and to the history of whose pleasures and brilliant and fantastic dissipation she had recently been listening with a lively and diverted ear, it seemed that, by some rapid and magical vicissitude, her little Plantagenet, the faithful and affectionate companion of her childhood, whose sorrows she had so often soothed, and who in her pure and devoted love had always found consolation and happiness, had become "the observed of all observers,"—the most remarkable where all was striking, and dazzling where all were brilliant !

His last visit to Cherbury, and its strange consequences, then occurred to her ; his passionate addresses, and their bitter parting. Here was surely matter enough for a maiden's reverie, and into a reverie Venetia certainly fell, from which she was roused by the voice of her uncle, who could not conceive what book his charming niece could find so interesting, and led her to feel what a very ill compliment she was paying to all present. Venetia hastily closed

the volume, and rose rather confused from her seat ; her radiant smile was the best apology to her uncle ; and she compensated for her previous inattention, by playing to him on the harpsichord. All the time, however, the image of Cadureis flitted across her vision, and she was glad when her mother moved to retire, that she might enjoy the opportunity of pondering in silence and unobserved over the strange history that she had read.

London is a wonderful place ! Four-and-twenty hours back, with a feeling of loneliness and depression amounting to pain, Venetia had fled to sleep as her only refuge ; now only a day had passed, and she had both seen and heard many things that had alike startled and pleased her ; had found powerful and charming friends ; and laid her head upon her pillow in a tumult of emotion that long banished slumber from her beautiful eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

VENETIA soon found that she must bid adieu for ever, in London, to her old habits of solitude. She soon discovered that she was never to be alone. Her aunt called upon them very early in the morning, and said that the whole day must be devoted to their court dresses ; and in a few minutes they were all whirled off to a celebrated milliner's. After innumerable consultations and experiments, the dress of Venetia was decided on ; her aunt and Lady Annabel were both assured that it would exceed in splendour and propriety any dress at the drawing-room. Indeed, as the great artist added, with such a model to work from it would reflect but little credit on the establishment, if any approached Miss Herbert in the effect she must inevitably produce.

While her mother was undergoing some of those attentions to which Venetia had recently submitted, and had retired for a few minutes into an adjoining apartment, our little lady of Cherbury strolled about the saloon in which she had been left, until her attention was attracted by a portrait of a young man in an oriental dress, standing very sublimely amid the ruins of some desert city ; a palm tree in the distance, and by his side a crouching camel, and some recumbent followers slumbering amid the fallen columns.

"That is Lord Cadureis, my love," said her aunt, who at the moment joined her, "the famous poet. All the young ladies are in love with him. I dare say you know his works by heart."

"No, indeed, aunt," said Venetia ; "I never even read them ; but I should like very much."

"Not read Lord Cadureis' poems ! Oh ! we must go and get

them directly for you. Everybody reads them. You will be looked upon quite as a little barbarian. We will stop the carriage at Stockdale's, and get them for you."

At this moment Lady Annabel rejoined them; and having made all their arrangements, they re-entered the carriage.

"Stop at Stockdale's," said her ladyship to the servant; "I must get Cadureis' last poem for Venetia. She will be quite back in her learning, Annabel."

"Cadureis' last poem!" said Lady Annabel; "do you mean Lord Cadureis? Is he a poet?"

"To be sure! Well, you are countrified not to know Lord Cadureis!"

"I know him very well," said Lady Annabel, gravely; "but I did not know he was a poet."

The Countess laughed, the carriage stopped, the book was brought; Lady Annabel looked very uneasy, and tried to catch her daughter's countenance, but, strange to say, for the first time in her life was quite unsuccessful. The Countess took the book, and immediately gave it Venetia. "There, my dear," said her aunt, "there never was anything so charming. I am so provoked that Cadureis is a Whig."

"A Whig!" said Lady Annabel, "he was not a Whig when I knew him."

"Oh! my dear, I am afraid he is worse than a Whig. He is almost a rebel! But then he is such a genius! Everything is allowed, you know, to a genius!" said the thoughtless sister-in-law.

Lady Annabel was silent! but the stillness of her emotion must not be judged from the stillness of her tongue. Her astonishment at all she had heard was only equalled by what we may justly term her horror. It was impossible that she could have listened to any communication at the same time so astounding, and to her so fearful.

"We knew Lord Cadureis when he was very young, aunt," said Venetia, in a very quiet tone. "He lived near mamma, in the country."

"Oh! my dear Annabel, if you see him in town bring him to me, he is the most difficult person in the world to get to one's house, and I would give anything if he would come and dine with me."

The Countess at last set her relations down at their hotel. When Lady Annabel was once more alone with her daughter, she said—"Venetia, dearest, give me that book your aunt lent you."

Venetia immediately handed it to her, but her mother did not open it; but saying—"The Bishop dines at four, darling, I think it is time for us to dress," Lady Annabel left the room.

To say the truth, Venetia was less surprised than disappointed

by this conduct of her mother's ; but she was not apt to murmur, and she tried to dismiss the subject from her thoughts.

It was with unfeigned delight that the kind-hearted Masham welcomed under his own roof his two best and dearest friends. He had asked nobody to meet them ; it was settled that they were to be quite alone, and to talk of nothing but Cherbury and Marringhurst. When they were seated at table, the Bishop, who had been detained at the House of Lords, and been rather hurried to be in time to receive his guests, turned to his servant and inquired whether any one had called.

"Yes, my lord, Lord Cadurcis," was the reply.

"Our old companion," said the Bishop to Lady Annabel, with a smile. "He has called upon me twice, and I have on both occasions unfortunately been absent."

Lady Annabel merely bowed an assent to the Bishop's remark. Venetia longed to speak, but found it impossible. "What is it that represses me?" she asked herself. "Is there to be another forbidden subject insensibly to arise between us? I must struggle against this indefinable despotism that seems to pervade my life."

"Have you met Lord Cadurcis, Sir?" at length asked Venetia.

"Once ; we resumed our acquaintance at a dinner party one day ; but I shall soon see a great deal of him, for he has just taken his seat. He is of age, you know."

"I hope he has come to years of discretion in every sense," said Lady Annabel, "but I fear not."

"Oh ! my dear Lady," said the Bishop, "he has become a great man ; he is our star. I assure you there is nobody in London talked of but Lord Cadurcis. He asked me a great deal after you and Cherbury. He will be delighted to see you."

"I cannot say," replied Lady Annabel, "that the desire of meeting is at all mutual. From all I hear, our connections and opinions are very different, and I dare say our habits likewise."

"My aunt lent us his new poem to-day," said Venetia very boldly.

"Have you read it?" asked the Bishop.

"I am no admirer of modern poetry," said Lady Annabel, somewhat tartly.

"Poetry of any kind is not much in my way," said the Bishop, "but if you like to read his poems, I will lend them to you, for he gave me a copy ; esteemed a great honour, I assure you."

"Thank you, my Lord," said Lady Annabel, "both Venetia and myself are very much engaged now ; and I do not wish her to read while she is in London. When we return to Cherbury she will have abundance of time, if desirable."

Both Venetia and her worthy host felt that the present subject of conversation was not very agreeable to Lady Annabel, and it was

immediately changed. They fell upon more gracious topics, and in spite of this somewhat sullen commencement the meeting was quite as delightful as they anticipated. Lady Annabel particularly exerted herself to please, and, as was invariably the case under such circumstances with this lady, she was eminently successful; she apparently endeavoured, by her remarkable kindness to her daughter, to atone for any unpleasant feeling which her previous manner might for an instant have occasioned. Venetia watched her beautiful and affectionate parent as Lady Annabel now dwelt with delight upon the remembrance of their happy home, and now recurred to the anxiety she naturally felt about her daughter's approaching presentation, with feelings of love and admiration, which made her accuse herself for the recent rebellion of her heart. She thought only of her mother's sorrows, and her devotion to her child; and, grateful for the unexpected course of circumstances which seemed to be leading every member of their former little society to honour and happiness, she resolved to persist in that career of duty and devotion to her mother, from which it seemed to her she had never deviated for a moment but to experience sorrow, misfortune, and remorse. Never did Venetia receive her mother's accustomed embrace and blessing with more responsive tenderness and gratitude than this night. She banished Cadurcis and his poems from her thoughts, confident that, so long as her mother approved neither of her continuing his acquaintance nor perusing his writings, it was well that the one should be a forgotten tie, and the other a sealed book.

CHAPTER VIII.

AMONG the most intimate acquaintances of Lady Annabel's brother was the nobleman who had been a minister during the American war, and who had also been the guardian of Lord Cadurcis, of whom, indeed, he was likewise a distant relative. He had called with his lady on Lady Annabel, after meeting her and her daughter at her brother's, and had cultivated her acquaintance with great kindness and assiduity, so that Lady Annabel had found it impossible to refuse his invitation to dinner.

This dinner occurred a few days after the visit of the Herberts to the Bishop, and that excellent personage, her own family, and some others equally distinguished, but all of the ministerial party, were invited to meet her. Lady Annabel found herself placed at table between a very pompous courtier, who, being a gourmand, was not very prompt to disturb his enjoyment by conversation, and

a young man whom she found very agreeable, and who at first, indeed, attracted her attention by his resemblance to some face with which she felt she was familiar, and yet which she was not successful in recalling. His manners were remarkably frank and ingenuous, yet soft and refined. Without having any peculiar brilliancy of expression, he was apt and fluent, and his whole demeanour characterized by a gentle modesty that was highly engaging. Apparently he had travelled a great deal, for he more than once alluded to his experience of foreign countries, but this was afterwards explained by Lady Annabel discovering, from an observation he let fall, that he was a sailor. A passing question from an opposite guest also told her that he was a member of parliament. While she was rather anxiously wishing to know who he might be, and congratulating herself that one in whose favour she was so much prepossessed should be on the right side, their host saluted him from the top of the table, and said, "Captain Cadurcis, a glass of wine."

The countenance was now explained. It was indeed Lord Cadurcis whom he resembled, though his eyes were dark blue, and his hair light brown. This then was that cousin who had been sent to sea to make his fortune, and whom Lady Annabel had a faint recollection of poor Mrs. Cadurcis once mentioning. George Cadurcis had not exactly made his fortune, but he had distinguished himself in his profession, and especially in Rodney's victory, and had fought his way up to the command of a frigate. The frigate had recently been paid off, and he had called to pay his respects to his noble relative with the hope of obtaining his interest for a new command. The guardian of his cousin, very much mortified with the conduct of his hopeful ward, was not very favourably impressed towards any one who bore the name of Cadurcis, yet George, with no pretence, had a winning honest manner that made friends; his lordship took a fancy to him, and as he could not at the moment obtain him a ship he did the next best thing for him in his power; a borough was vacant, and he put him into parliament.

"Do you know," said Lady Annabel to her neighbour, "I have been fancying all dinner time that we had met before; but I find it is that you only resemble one with whom I was once acquainted."

"My cousin!" said the Captain, "he will be very mortified when I go home, if I tell him your ladyship speaks of his acquaintance as one that is past."

"It is some years since we met," said Lady Annabel, in a more reserved tone.

"Plantagenet can never forget what he owes to you," said Captain Cadurcis. "How often has he spoken to me of you and Miss Herbert! It was only the other night—yes! not a week ago—

that he made me sit up with him all night, while he was telling stories of Cherbury ; you see I am quite familiar with the spot," he added, smiling.

"You are very intimate with your cousin, I see," said Lady Annabel.

"I live a great deal with him," said George Cadurcis. "You know we had never met or communicated ; and it was not Plantagenet's fault, I am sure ; for of all the generous, amiable, loveable beings, Cadurcis is the best I ever met with in this world. Ever since we knew each other he has been a brother to me ; and though our politics and opinions are so opposed, and we naturally live in such a different circle, he would have insisted even upon my having apartments in his house, nor is it possible for me to give you the slightest idea of the delicate and unceasing kindness I experience from him. If we had lived together all our lives, it would be impossible to be more united."

This eulogium rather softened Lady Annabel's heart ; she even observed, "I always thought Lord Cadurcis naturally well disposed ; I always hoped he would turn out well ; but I was afraid, from what I heard, he was very much changed. He shows, however, his sense and good feeling in selecting you for his friend ; for you are his natural one," she added, after a momentary pause.

"And then you know," he continued, "it is so purely kind of him ; for of course I am not fit to be a companion for Cadurcis, and perhaps, as far as that, no one is. Of course we have not a thought in common. I know nothing but what I have picked up in a rough life ; and he, you know, is the cleverest person that ever lived—at least I think so."

Lady Annabel smiled.

"Well, he is very young," she observed, "much your junior, Captain Cadurcis ; and I hope he will yet prove a faithful steward of the great gifts that God has given him."

"I would stake all I hold dear," said the Captain, with great animation, "that Cadurcis turns out well. He has such a good heart. Ah ! Lady Annabel, if he be now and then a little irregular, only think of the temptations that assail him. Only one-and-twenty—his own master—and all London at his feet. It is too much for any one's head. But say or think what the world may, I know him better than they do ; and I know there is not a finer creature in existence. I hope his old friends will not desert him," added Captain Cadurcis, with a smile which seemed to deprecate the severity of Lady Annabel, "for in spite of all his fame and prosperity, perhaps, after all, this is the time when he most needs them."

"Very possibly," said her ladyship rather dryly.

While the mother was engaged in this conversation with her neighbour respecting her former interesting acquaintance, such was the fame of Lord Cadurcis then in the metropolis, that he also formed the topic of conversation at another part of the table, to which the daughter was an attentive listener. The tone in which he was spoken of, however, was of a very different character. While no one disputed his genius, his principles, temper, and habits of life were submitted to the severest scrutiny; and it was with blended feelings of interest and astonishment that Venetia listened to the detail of wild opinions, capricious conduct, and extravagant and eccentric behaviour ascribed to the companion of her childhood, who had now become the spoiled child of society. A very shrewd gentleman, who had taken an extremely active part in this discussion, inquired of Venetia, next to whom he was seated, whether she had read his lordship's last poem. He was extremely surprised when Venetia answered in the negative; but he seized the opportunity of giving her an elaborate criticism on the poetical genius of Cadurcis. "As for his style," said the critic, "no one can deny that is his own, and he will last by his style; as for his philosophy, and all these wild opinions of his, they will pass away, because they are not genuine, they are not his own, they are borrowed. He will outwrite them: depend upon it, he will. The fact is, as a friend of mine observed the other day, Herbert's writings have turned his head. Of course you could know nothing about them, but there are wonderful things in them, I can tell you that."

"I believe it most sincerely," said Venetia.

The critic stared at his neighbour. "Hush!" said he, "his wife and daughter are here. We must not talk of these things. You know Lady Annabel Herbert? There she is; a very fine woman too. And that is his daughter there, I believe, that dark girl with a turned-up nose. I cannot say she warrants the poetical address to her:—

‘My precious pearl the false and glittering world
Has ne’er polluted with its garish light!’

She does not look much like a pearl, does she? She should keep in solitude, eh?"

The ladies rose and relieved Venetia from her embarrassment.

After dinner Lady Annabel introduced George Cadurcis to her daughter; and, seated by them both, he contrived without effort, and without the slightest consciousness of success, to confirm the pleasing impression in his favour which he had already made, and when they parted, it was even with a mutual wish that they might meet again.

CHAPTER IX.

It was the night after the drawing-room. Lord Cadurcis was at Brookes' dining at midnight, having risen since only a few hours. Being a mal-content, he had ceased to attend the Court, where his original reception had been most gracious, which he had returned by some very factious votes, and a very caustic lampoon.

A party of young men entered from the Court Ball, which in those days always terminated at midnight, whence the guests generally proceeded to Ranelagh; one or two of them seated themselves at the table at which Cadurcis was sitting. They were full of a new beauty who had been presented. Their violent and even extravagant encomiums excited his curiosity. Such a creature had never been seen, she was peerless, the most radiant of acknowledged charms had been dimmed before her. Their Majesties had accorded to her the most marked reception. A Prince of the blood had honoured her with his hand. Then they began to expatiate with fresh enthusiasm on her unparalleled loveliness.

"Oh! Cadurcis," said a young noble, who was one of his extreme admirers, "she is the only creature I ever beheld worthy of being one of your heroines."

"Whom are you talking about?" asked Cadurcis in a rather listless tone.

"The new beauty, of course."

"And who may she be?"

"Miss Herbert, to be sure. Who speaks or thinks of any one else?"

"What, Ve——, I mean Miss Herbert?" exclaimed Cadurcis, with no little energy.

"Yes. Do you know her?"

"Do you mean to say——" and Cadurcis stopped and rose from the table, and joined the party round the fire. "What Miss Herbert is it?" he added after a short pause.

"Why *the* Miss Herbert; Herbert's daughter, to be sure. She was presented to-day by her mother."

"Lady Annabel?"

"The same."

"Presented to-day!" said Cadurcis audibly, yet speaking as it were to himself. "Presented to-day! Presented! How strange!"

"So every one thinks; one of the strangest things that ever happened," remarked a bystander.

"And I did not even know they were in town," continued Cadurcis, for, from his irregular hours, he had not seen his cousin since the party of yesterday. He began walking up and down the room,

muttering, "Masham, Weymouth, London, presented at Court, and I know nothing. How life changes! Venetia at Court, my Venetia!" Then turning round and addressing the young nobleman who had first spoken to him, he asked "if the ball were over."

"Yes; all the world are going to Ranelagh. Are you inclined to take a round?"

"I have a strange fancy," said Cadurcis, "and if you will go with me, I will take you in my vis-a-vis. It is here."

This was an irresistible invitation, and in a few minutes the companions were on their way; Cadurcis, apparently with no peculiar interest in the subject, leading the conversation very artfully to the presentation of Miss Herbert. His friend was heartily inclined to gratify his curiosity. He gave him the most ample details of Miss Herbert's person. Even her costume, and the sensation both produced; how she was presented by her mother, who, after so long an estrangement from the world, scarcely excited less impression, and the remarkable cordiality with which both mother and daughter were greeted by the sovereign and his royal consort.

The two young noblemen found Ranelagh very crowded, but the presence of Lord Cadurcis occasioned a great sensation the moment he was recognised. Everywhere the whisper went round, and many parties crowded near to catch a glimpse of the hero of the day. "Which is he? That fair, tall young man? No, the other to be sure. Is it really he? How very distinguished! How very melancholy! Quite the poet. Do you think he is really so unhappy as he looks? I would sooner see him than the King and Queen. He seems very young, but then he has seen so much of the world! Fine eyes, beautiful hair! I wonder who is his friend? How proud he must be! Who is that lady he bowed to? That is the Duke of —— speaking to him." Such were the remarks that might be caught in the vicinity of Lord Cadurcis as he took his round, gazed at by the assembled crowd, of whom many knew him only by fame, for the charm of Ranelagh was that it was rather a popular than a merely fashionable assembly. Society at large blended with the Court, which maintained and renewed its influence by being witnessed under the most graceful auspices. The personal authority of the aristocracy has decreased with the disappearance of Ranelagh and similar places of amusement, where rank was not exclusive, and luxury by the gratification it occasioned others seemed robbed of half its selfism.

In his second round, Lord Cadurcis recognised the approach of the Herberts. They formed a portion of a very large party. Lady Annabel was leaning on her brother, whom Cadurcis knew by sight; Venetia was at the side of her aunt, and several gentlemen were hovering about them; among them, to his surprise, his cousin,

George Cadureis, in his uniform, for he had been to Court and to the Court Ball. Venetia was talking with animation. She was in her Court dress and in powder. Her appearance was strange to him. He could scarcely recognise the friend of his childhood; but without any doubt in all that assembly, unrivalled in the whole world for beauty, grace, and splendour, she was without a parallel: a cynosure on which all eyes were fixed.

So occupied were the ladies of the Herbert party by the conversation of their numerous and brilliant attendants, that the approach of any one else but Lord Cadureis might have been unnoticed by them, but a hundred tongues before he drew nigh had prepared Venetia for his appearance. She was indeed most anxious to behold him, and though she was aware that her heart fluttered not slightly as the moment was at hand, she commanded her gaze, and her eyes met his, although she was very doubtful whether he might choose or care to recognise her. He bowed almost to the ground; and when Venetia had raised her responsive head he had passed by.

"Why, Cadureis, you know Miss Herbert?" said his friend in a tone of some astonishment.

"Well; but it is a long time since I have seen her."

"Is she not beautiful?"

"I never doubted on that subject; I tell you, Scrope, we must contrive to join her party. I wish we had some of our friends among them. Here comes the Monteagle; aid me to escape her."

The most fascinating smile failed in arresting the progress of Cadureis; fortunately, the lady was the centre of a brilliant band;—all that he had to do, therefore, was boldly to proceed.

"Do you think my cousin is altered since you knew him?" inquired George Cadureis of Venetia.

"I scarcely had time to observe him," she replied.

"I wish you would let me bring him to you. He did not know until this moment you were in town. I have not seen him since we met yesterday."

"Oh, no," said Venetia. "Do not disturb him."

In time, however, Lord Cadureis was again in sight; and now without any hesitation he stopped, and falling into the line by Miss Herbert, he addressed her: "I am proud of being remembered by Miss Herbert," he said.

"I am most happy to meet you," replied Venetia, with unaffected sincerity.

"And Lady Annabel, I have not been able to catch her eye—is she quite well? I was ignorant that you were in London until I heard of your triumph this night."

The Countess whispered her niece, and Venetia accordingly

presented Lord Cadurcis to her aunt. This was a most gratifying circumstance to him. He was anxious, by some means or other, to effect his entrance into her circle; and he had an irresistible suspicion that Lady Annabel no longer looked upon him with eyes of favour. So he resolved to enlist the aunt as his friend. Few persons could be more winning than Cadurcis, when he willed it; and every attempt to please from one whom all emulated to gratify and honour, was sure to be successful. The Countess, who, in spite of politics, was a secret votary of his, was quite prepared to be enchanted. She congratulated herself on forming, as she had long wished, an acquaintance with one so celebrated. She longed to pass Lady Monteagle in triumph. Cadurcis improved his opportunity to the utmost. It was impossible for any one to be more engaging; lively, yet at the same time gentle, and deferential with all his originality. He spoke, indeed, more to the aunt than to Venetia, but when he addressed the latter, there was a melting, almost a mournful tenderness in his tones, that alike affected her heart and charmed her imagination. Nor could she be insensible to the gratification she experienced as she witnessed, every instant, the emotion his presence excited among the passers by, and of which Cadurcis himself seemed so properly and so utterly unconscious. And this was Plantagenet!

Lord Cadurcis spoke of his cousin, who, on his joining the party, had assisted the arrangement by moving to the other side; and he spoke of him with a regard which pleased Venetia, though his lordship envied him his good fortune in having the advantage of a prior acquaintance with Miss Herbert in town; "but then we are old acquaintances in the country," he added, half in a playful, half in a melancholy tone, "are we not?"

"It is a long time that we have known each other, and it is a long time since we have met," replied Venetia.

"A delicate reproach," said his lordship; "but perhaps rather my misfortune than my fault. My thoughts have been often, I might say ever, at Cherbury."

"And the abbey; have you forgotten the abbey?"

"I have never been near it since a morning you perhaps remember," said his lordship in a low voice. "Ah! Miss Herbert," he continued, with a sigh, "I was young then; I have lived to change many opinions, and some of which you then disapproved."

The party stopped at a box just vacant, and in which the ladies seated themselves while their carriages were inquired for. Lord Cadurcis, with a rather faltering heart, went up to pay his respects to Venetia's mother. Lady Annabel received him with a courtesy, that however was scarcely cordial, but the Countess instantly presented him to her husband with an unction which a little astonished

her sister-in-law. Then a whisper, but unobserved, passed between the Earl and his lady, and in a minute Lord Cadurcis had been invited to dine with them on the next day, and meet his old friends from the country. Cadurcis was previously engaged, but hesitated not a moment in accepting the invitation. The Montegle party now passed by; the lady looked a little surprised at the company in which she found her favourite, and not a little mortified by his neglect. What business had Cadurcis to be speaking to that Miss Herbert? Was it not enough that the whole day not another name had scarcely crossed her ear, but the night must even witness the conquest of Lord Cadurcis by the new beauty? It was such bad ton, it was so unlike him, it was so underbred, for a person of his position immediately to bow before the new idol of the hour—and a Tory girl too! It was the last thing she could have expected from him. She should, on the contrary, have thought that the very universal admiration which this Miss Herbert commanded would have been exactly the reason why a man like Cadurcis would have seemed almost unconscious of her existence. She determined to remonstrate with him; and she was sure of a speedy opportunity, for he was to dine with her on the morrow.

CHAPTER X.

NOTWITHSTANDING Lady Annabel's reserved demeanour, Lord Cadurcis, supported by the presence of his cousin, whom he had discovered to be a favourite of that lady, ventured to call upon her the next day, but she was out. They were to meet, however, at dinner, where Cadurcis determined to omit no opportunity to propitiate her. The Countess had a great deal of tact, and she contrived to make up a party to receive him, in which there were several of his friends, among them his cousin and the Bishop of ———, and no strangers who were not, like herself, his great admirers; but if she had known more, she need not have given herself this trouble, for there was a charm among her guests of which she was ignorant, and Cadurcis went determined to please and to be pleased.

At dinner he was seated next to Lady Annabel, and it was impossible for any person to be more deferential, soft, and insinuating. He spoke of old days with emotion which he did not attempt to suppress; he alluded to the present with infinite delicacy. But it was very difficult to make way. Lady Annabel was courteous, but she was reserved. His lively reminiscences elicited from her no corresponding sentiment; and no art would induce her to dwell upon the present. If she only would have condescended to compliment him,

it would have given him an opportunity of expressing his distaste of the life which he now led, and a description of the only life which he wished to lead; but Lady Annabel studiously avoided affording him any opening of the kind. She treated him like a stranger. She impressed upon him without effort that she would only consider him an acquaintance. How Cadurcis, satiated with the incense of the whole world, sighed for one single congratulation from Lady Annabel! Nothing could move her.

"I was so surprised to meet you last night," at length he again observed. "I have made so many inquiries after you. Our dear friend the Bishop, was, I fear, almost wearied with my inquiries after Cherbury. I know not how it was, I felt quite a pang when I heard that you had left it, and that all these years, when I have been conjuring up so many visions of what was passing under that dear roof, you were at Weymouth."

"Yes. We were at Weymouth some time."

"But do not you long to see Cherbury again? I cannot tell you how I pant for it. For my part, I have seen the world, and I have seen enough of it. After all, the end of all our exertions is to be happy at home; that is the end of everything; don't you think so?"

"A happy home is certainly a great blessing," replied Lady Annabel; "and a very rare one."

"But why should it be so rare?" inquired Lord Cadurcis.

"It is our own fault," said Lady Annabel; "our vanity drives us from our hearths."

"But we soon return again, and calm and cooled. For my part, I have no object in life but to settle down at the old abbey, and never to quit again our woods. But I shall lead a dull life without my neighbours," he added, with a smile, and in a tone half coaxing.

"I suppose you never see Lord * * * * * now?" said Lady Annabel, mentioning his late guardian. There was, as Cadurcis fancied, some sarcasm in the question, though not in the tone in which it was asked.

"No, I never see him," his lordship answered firmly; "we differ in our opinions, and I differ from him with regret; but I differ from a sense of duty, and therefore I have no alternative."

"The claims of duty are of course paramount," observed Lady Annabel.

"You know my cousin?" said Cadurcis, to turn the conversation.

"Yes, and I like him very much; he appears to be a sensible, amiable person, of excellent principles."

"I am not bound to admire George's principles," said Lord Ca-

durcis, gaily; "but I respect them, because I know that they are conscientious. I love George; he is my only relation, and he is my friend."

"I trust he will always be your friend, for I think you will then at least, know one person on whom you can depend."

"I believe it. The friendships of the world are wind."

"I am surprised to hear you say so," said Lady Annabel.

"Why, Lady Annabel?"

"You have so many friends."

Lord Cadurcis smiled. "I wish," he said, after a little hesitation, "if only for 'Auld lang syne,' I might include Lady Annabel Herbert among them."

"I do not think there is any basis for friendship between us, my lord," she said, very dryly.

"The past must ever be with me," said Lord Cadurcis, "and I should have thought a sure and solid one."

"Our opinions on all subjects are so adverse, that I must believe that there could be no great sympathy in our feelings."

"My feelings are beyond my control," he replied; "they are, and must ever be, totally independent of my opinions."

Lady Annabel did not reply. His lordship felt baffled, but he was resolved to make one more effort.

"Do you know," he said, "I can scarcely believe myself in London to-day? To be sitting next to you, to see Miss Herbert, to hear Doctor Masham's voice—oh! does it not recall Cherbury, or Marringhurst, or that day at Cadurcis, when you were so good as to smile over my rough repast. Ah! Lady Annabel, those days were happy! those were feelings that can never die! All the glitter and hubbub of the world can never make me forget them,—can never make you, I hope, Lady Annabel, quite recall them with an effort. We were friends then: let us be friends now."

"I am too old to cultivate new friendships," said her ladyship; "and if we are to be friends, Lord Cadurcis, I am sorry to say that, after the interval that has occurred since we last parted, we should have to begin again."

"It is a long time," said his lordship, mournfully, "a very long time, and one—in spite of what the world may think—to which I cannot look back with any self-congratulation. I wished three years ago never to leave Cadurcis again. Indeed I did; and indeed it was not my fault that I quitted it."

"It was no one's fault, I hope, my lord. Whatever the cause may have been, I have ever remained quite ignorant of it; I wished, and wish, to remain ignorant of it. I, for one, have ever considered it the wise dispensation of a merciful Providence."

Cadurcis ground his teeth; a dark look came over him which,

when once it rose on his brow, was with difficulty dispelled ; and for the remainder of the dinner he continued silent and gloomy.

He was, however, not unobserved by Venetia. She had watched his evident attempts to conciliate her mother with lively interest ; she had witnessed their failure with sincere sorrow. In spite of that stormy interview, the results of which—in his hasty departure, and the severance of their acquaintance—she had often regretted, she had always retained for him the greatest affection. During these three years he had still, in her inmost heart, remained her own Plantagenet—her adopted brother, whom she loved, and in whose welfare her feelings were deeply involved. The mysterious circumstances of her birth, and the discoveries to which they had led, had filled her mind with a fanciful picture of human nature, over which she had long brooded. A great poet had become her ideal of a man. Sometimes she had sighed—when musing over her father and Plantagenet on the solitary sea-shore at Weymouth—that Cadurcis, instead of being the merely amiable, and somewhat narrow-minded being that she supposed, had not been invested with those brilliant and commanding qualities which she felt could alone master her esteem. Often had she, in those abstracted hours, played with her imagination in combining the genius of her father with the soft heart of that friend to whom she was so deeply attached. She had wished, in her reveries, that Cadurcis might have been a great man ; that he might have existed in an atmosphere of glory amid the plaudits and admiration of his race ; and that then he might have turned from all that fame, so dear to them both, to the heart which could alone sympathise with the native simplicity of his childhood.

The ladies withdrew. The Bishop and another of the guests joined them after a short interval. The rest remained below, and drank their wine with the freedom not unusual in those days, Lord Cadurcis among them, although it was not his habit. But he was not convivial, though he never passed the bottle untouched. He was in one of those dark humours of which there was a latent spring in his nature, but which in old days had been kept in check by his simple life, his inexperienced mind, and the general kindness that greeted him, and which nothing but the caprice and perversity of his mother could occasionally develope. But since the great revolution in his position, since circumstances had made him alike acquainted with his nature, and had brought all society to acknowledge its superiority ; since he had gained and felt his irresistible power, and had found all the world, and all the glory of it, at his feet, these moods had become more frequent. The slightest reaction in the self-complacency that was almost unceasingly stimulated by the applause of applauded men and the

love of the loveliest women, instantly took the shape and found refuge in the immediate form of the darkest spleen, generally, indeed, brooding in silence, and, if speaking, expressing itself only in sarcasm. Cadureis was indeed—as we have already described him—the spoiled child of society; a froward and petted darling, not always to be conciliated by kindness, but furious when neglected or controlled. He was habituated to triumph; it had been his lot to come, to see, and to conquer; even the procrastination of certain success was intolerable to him; his energetic volition could not endure a check. To Lady Annabel Herbert, indeed, he was not exactly what he was to others; there was a spell in old associations from which he unconsciously could not emancipate himself, and from which it was his opinion he honoured her in not desiring to be free. He had his reasons for wishing to regain his old, his natural influence, over her heart; he did not doubt for an instant that, if Cadureis sued, success must follow the condescending effort. He had sued, and he had been met with coldness, almost with disdain. He had addressed her in those terms of tenderness which experience had led him to believe were irresistible, yet to which he seldom had recourse, for hitherto he had not been under the degrading necessity of courting. He had dwelt with fondness on the insignificant past, because it was connected with her; he had regretted, or affected even to despise, the glorious present, because it seemed, for some indefinite cause, to have estranged him from her hearth. Yes! he had humbled himself before her; he had thrown with disdain at her feet all that dazzling fame and expanding glory which seemed his peculiar and increasing privilege. He had delicately conveyed to her that even these would be sacrificed, not only without a sigh, but with cheerful delight, to find himself once more living, as of old, in the limited world of her social affections. Three years ago he had been rejected by the daughter, because he was an undistinguished youth. Now the mother recoiled from his fame. And who was this woman? The same cold, stern heart that had alienated the gifted Herbert; the same narrow, rigid mind that had repudiated ties that every other woman in the world would have gloried to cherish and acknowledge. And with her he had passed his prejudiced youth, and fancied, like an idiot, that he had found sympathy! Yes, so long as he was a slave, a mechanical, submissive slave, bowing his mind to all the traditionary bigotry which she adored, never daring to form an opinion for himself, worshipping her idol—custom, and labouring by habitual hypocrisy to perpetuate the delusions of all around her!

In the meantime, while Lord Cadureis was chewing the cud of

these bitter feelings, we will take the opportunity of explaining the immediate cause of Lady Annabel's frigid reception of his friendly advances. All that she had heard of Cadurcis, all the information she had within these few days so rapidly acquired of his character and conduct, were indeed not calculated to dispose her to witness the renewal of their intimacy with feelings of remarkable satisfaction. But this morning she had read his poem, the poem that all London was talking of, and she had read it with horror. She looked upon Cadurcis as a lost man. With her, indeed, since her marriage, an imaginative mind had become an object of terror; but there were some peculiarities in the tone of Cadurcis' genius, which magnified to excess her general apprehension on this head. She traced, in every line, the evidences of a raging vanity, which she was convinced must prompt its owner to sacrifice, on all occasions, every feeling of duty to its gratification. Amid all the fervour of rebellious passions, and the violence of a wayward mind, a sentiment of profound egotism appeared to her impressed on every page she perused. Great as might have been the original errors of Herbert,—awful as in her estimation were the crimes to which they had led him, they might in the first instance be traced rather to a perverted view of society than of himself. But self was the idol of Cadurcis; self distorted into a phantom that seemed to Lady Annabel pregnant not only with terrible crimes, but with the basest and most humiliating vices. The certain degradation which in the instance of her husband had been the consequence of a bad system, would, in her opinion, in the case of Cadurcis, be the result of a bad nature; and when she called to mind that there had once been a probability that this individual might have become the husband of her Venetia, her child whom it had been the sole purpose of her life to save from the misery of which she herself had been the victim; that she had even dwelt on the idea with complacency, encouraged its progress, regretted its abrupt termination, but consoled herself by the flattering hope that time, with even more favourable auspices, would mature it into fulfilment; she trembled, and turned pale.

It was to the Bishop that, after dinner, Lady Annabel expressed some of the feelings which the reappearance of Cadurcis had occasioned her.

"I see nothing but misery for his future," she exclaimed; "I tremble for him when he addresses me. In spite of the glittering surface on which he now floats, I foresee only a career of violence, degradation, and remorse."

"He is a problem difficult to solve," replied Masham; "but there are elements not only in his character, but his career, so dif-

ferent from those of the person of whom we were speaking, that I am not inclined at once to admit, that the result must necessarily be the same."

"I see none," replied Lady Annabel; "at least, none of sufficient influence to work any material change."

"What think you of his success?" replied Masham. "Cadurcis is evidently proud of it. With all his affected scorn of the world, he is the slave of society. He may pique the feelings of mankind, but I doubt whether he will outrage them."

"He is on such a dizzy eminence," replied Lady Annabel, "that I do not believe he is capable of calculating so finely. He does not believe, I am sure, in the possibility of resistance. His vanity will tempt him onwards."

"Not to persecution," said Masham. "Now my opinion of Cadurcis is, that his egotism, or selfism, or whatever you may style it, will ultimately preserve him from any very fatal, from any irrecoverable excesses. He is of the world—worldly. All his works, all his conduct, tend only to astonish mankind. He is not prompted by any visionary ideas of ameliorating his species. The instinct of self-preservation will serve him as ballast."

"We shall see," said Lady Annabel; "for myself, whatever may be his end, I feel assured that great and disgraceful vicissitudes are in store for him."

"It is strange after what, in comparison with such extraordinary changes, must be esteemed so brief an interval," observed Masham, with a smile, "to witness such a revolution in his position. I often think to myself, can this indeed be our little Plantagenet?"

"It is awful!" said Lady Annabel; "much more than strange. For myself, when I recall certain indications of his feelings when he was last at Cadurcis, and think for a moment of the results to which they might have led, I shiver; I assure you, my dear Lord, I tremble from head to foot. And I encouraged him! I smiled with fondness on his feelings! I thought I was securing the peaceful happiness of my child! What can we trust to in this world! It is too dreadful to dwell upon! It must have been an interposition of Providence that Venetia escaped!"

"Dear little Venetia!" exclaimed the good Bishop; "for I believe I shall call her little Venetia to the day of my death. How well she looks to-night! Her aunt is, I think, very fond of her! See!"

"Yes, it pleases me," said Lady Annabel; "but I do wish my sister was not such an admirer of Lord Cadurcis' poems. You cannot conceive how uneasy it makes me. I am quite annoyed that he was asked here to-day. Why ask him?"

"Oh! there is no harm," said Masham; "you must forget the past. By all accounts, Cadureis is not a marrying man. Indeed, as I understood, marriage with him is at present quite out of the question. And as for Venetia, she rejected him before, and she will, if necessary, reject him again. He has been a brother to her, and after that he can be no more. Girls never fall in love with those with whom they are bred up."

"I hope—I believe there is no occasion for apprehension," replied Lady Annabel; "indeed it has scarcely entered my head. The very charms he once admired in Venetia can have no sway over him, as I should think, now. I should believe him as little capable of appreciating Venetia now, as he was when last at Cherbury, of anticipating the change in his own character."

"You mean opinions, my dear Lady, for characters never change. Believe me, Cadureis is radically the same as in old days. Circumstances have only developed his latent predisposition."

"Not changed, my dear Lord! what, that innocent, sweet-tempered, docile child ——"

"Hush! here he comes."

The Earl and his guests entered the room; a circle was formed round Lady Annabel; some evening visitors arrived; there was singing. It had not been the intention of Lord Cadureis to return to the drawing-room after his rebuff by Lady Annabel; he had meditated making his peace at Monteagle House; but when the moment of his projected departure had arrived, he could not resist the temptation of again seeing Venetia. He entered the room last, and some moments after his companions. Lady Annabel, who watched the general entrance, concluded he had gone, and her attention was now fully engaged. Lord Cadureis remained at the end of the room alone, apparently abstracted, and looking far from amiable; but his eye, in reality, was watching Venetia. Suddenly her aunt approached her, and invited the lady who was conversing with Miss Herbert to sing; Lord Cadureis immediately advanced, and took her seat. Venetia was surprised that for the first time in her life with Plantagenet she felt embarrassed. She had met his look when he approached her, and had welcomed, or, at least, intended to welcome him with a smile, but she was at a loss for words; she was haunted with the recollection of her mother's behaviour to him at dinner, and she looked down on the ground, far from being at ease.

"Venetia!" said Lord Cadureis.

She started.

"We are alone," he said; "let me call you Venetia when we are alone."

She did not—she could not reply ; she felt confused ; the blood rose to her cheek.

“How changed is everything !” continued Cadureis. “To think the day should ever arrive when I should have to beg your permission to call you Venetia !”

She looked up ; she met his glance. It was mournful ; nay, his eyes were suffused with tears. She saw at her side the gentle and melancholy Plantagenet of her childhood.

“I cannot speak ; I am agitated at meeting you,” she said with her native frankness. “It is so long since we have been alone ; and, as you say, all is so changed.”

“But are you changed, Venetia ?” he said in a voice of emotion, “for all other change is nothing.”

“I meet you with pleasure,” she replied ; “I hear of your fame with pride. You cannot suppose that it is possible I should cease to be interested in your welfare.”

“Your mother does not meet me with pleasure ; she hears of nothing that has occurred with pride ; your mother has ceased to take an interest in my welfare ; and why should you be unchanged ?”

“You mistake my mother.”

“No, no,” replied Cadureis, shaking his head, “I have read her inmost soul to-day. Your mother hates me,—me, whom she once styled her son. She was a mother once to me, and you were my sister. If I have lost her heart, why have I not lost yours ?”

“My heart, if you care for it, is unchanged,” said Venetia.

“O Venetia, whatever you may think, I never wanted the solace of a sister’s love more than I do at this moment.”

“I pledged my affection to you when we were children,” replied Venetia ; “you have done nothing to forfeit it, and it is yours still.”

“When we were children,” said Cadureis, musingly ; “when we were innocent ; when we were happy. You, at least, are innocent still ; are you happy, Venetia ?”

“Life has brought sorrows even to me, Plantagenet.”

The blood deserted his heart when she called him Plantagenet ; he breathed with difficulty.

“When I last returned to Cherbury,” he said, “you told me you were changed, Venetia ; you revealed to me on another occasion the secret cause of your affliction. I was a boy then,—a foolish, ignorant boy. Instead of sympathising with your heart-felt anxiety, my silly vanity was offended by feelings I should have shared, and soothed, and honoured. Ah ! Venetia, well had it been for one of us that I had conducted myself more kindly, more wisely.”

“Nay, Plantagenet, believe me, I remember that interview only to regret it. The recollection of it has always occasioned me great

grief. We were both to blame; but we were both children then. We must pardon each other's faults."

"You will hear,—that is, if you care to listen, Venetia,—much of my conduct and opinions," continued Lord Cadurcis, "that may induce you to believe me headstrong and capricious. Perhaps I am less of both in all things than the world imagines. But of this be certain, that my feelings towards you have never changed, whatever you may permit them to be; and if some of my boyish judgments have, as was but natural, undergone some transformation, be you, my sweet friend, in some degree consoled for the inconsistency, since I have at length learned duly to appreciate one of whom we then alike knew little, but whom a natural inspiration taught you, at least, justly to appreciate—I need not say I mean the illustrious father of your being."

Venetia could not restrain her tears; she endeavoured to conceal her agitated countenance behind the fan with which she was fortunately provided.

"To me a forbidden subject," said Venetia, "at least with them I could alone converse upon it, but one that my mind never deserts."

"Oh! Venetia," exclaimed Lord Cadurcis with a sigh, "would we were both with him!"

"A wild thought," she murmured, "and one I must not dwell upon."

"We shall meet, I hope," said Lord Cadurcis; "we must meet—meet often. I called upon your mother to-day, fruitlessly. You must attempt to conciliate her. Why should we be parted? We, at least, are friends, and more than friends. I cannot exist unless we meet, and meet with the frankness of old days."

"I think you mistake mamma; I think you may, indeed. Remember how lately she has met you, and after how long an interval! A little time, and she will resume her former feelings, and believe that you have never forfeited yours. Besides, we have friends, mutual friends. My aunt admires you, and here I naturally must be a great deal. And the Bishop,—he still loves you; that I am sure he does: and your cousin,—mamma likes your cousin. I am sure if you can manage only to be patient,—if you will only attempt to conciliate a little, all will be as before. Remember, too, how changed your position is," Venetia added with a smile; "you allow me to forget you are a great man, but mamma is naturally restrained by all this wonderful revolution. When she finds that you really are the Lord Cadurcis whom she knew such a very little boy,—the Lord Cadurcis who, without her aid, would never have been able even to write his fine poems,—oh! she must love you again! How can she help it?"

Cadureis smiled. "We shall see," he said. "In the mean time do not you desert me, Venetia."

"That is impossible," she replied; "the happiest of my days have been passed with you. You remember the inscription on the jewel? I shall keep to my vows."

"That was a very good inscription so far as it went," said Cadureis; and then, as if a little alarmed at his temerity, he changed the subject.

"Do you know," said Venetia, after a pause, "I am treating you all this time as a poet, merely in deference to public opinion. Not a line have I been permitted to read; but I am resolved to rebel, and you must arrange it all."

"Ah!" said the enraptured Cadureis, "this is fame!"

At this moment the Countess approached them, and told Venetia that her mother wished to speak to her. Lady Annabel had discovered the tête-à-tête, and resolved instantly to terminate it. Lord Cadureis, however, who was quick as lightning, read all that was necessary in Venetia's look. Instead of instantly retiring, he remained some little time longer, talked a great deal to the Countess, —who was perfectly enchanted with him,—even sauntered up to the singers, and complimented them, and did not make his bow until he had convinced at least the mistress of the mansion, if not her sister-in-law, that it was not Venetia Herbert who was his principal attraction in this agreeable society.

CHAPTER XI.

THE moment he had quitted Venetia, Lord Cadureis returned home. He could not endure the usual routine of gaiety after her society; and his coachman, often waiting until five o'clock in the morning at Monteagle House, could scarcely assure himself of his good fortune in this exception to his accustomed trial of patience. The vis-a-vis stopped, and Lord Cadureis bounded out with a light step and a lighter heart. His table was covered with letters. The first one that caught his eye was a missive from Lady Monteagle. Cadureis seized it like a wild animal darting on its prey, tore it in half without opening it, and, grasping the poker, crammed it with great energy into the fire. This exploit being achieved, Cadureis began walking up and down the room; and indeed he paced it for nearly a couple of hours in a deep reverie, and evidently under a considerable degree of excitement, for his gestures were violent, and his voice often audible. At length, about an hour after midnight, he rang for his valet, tore off his cravat, and hurled it to one corner

of the apartment, called for his robe de chambre, soda water, and more lights, seated himself, and began pouring forth, faster almost than his pen could trace the words, the poem that he had been meditating ever since he had quitted the roof where he had met Venetia. She had expressed a wish to read his poems; he had resolved instantly to compose one for her solitary perusal. Thus he relieved his heart:—

I.

Within a cloistered pile, whose Gothic towers,
Rose by the margin of a sedgy lake,
Embosomed in a valley of green bowers,
And girt by many a grove, and ferny brake
Loved by the antlered deer; a tender youth
Whom Time to childhood's gentle sway of love
Still spared yet; innocent as is the dove,
Nor wounded yet by Care's relentless tooth;
Stood musing: of that fair antique domain
The orphan Lord! And yet no childish thought
With wayward purpose holds its transient reign
In his young mind, with deeper feelings fraught;
Then mystery all to him, and yet a dream,
That Time has touched with its revealing beam.

II.

There came a maiden to that lonely boy,
And like to him as is the morn to night;
Her sunny face a very type of joy,
And with her soul's unclouded lustre bright.
Still scantier summers had her brow illumed
Than that on which she threw a witching smile,
Unconscious of the spell that could beguile
His being of the burthen it was doomed
By his ancestral blood to bear—a spirit
Rife with desponding thoughts and fancies drear,
A moody soul that men sometimes inherit,
And worse than all the woes the world may bear.
But when he met that maiden's dazzling eye,
He bade each gloomy image baffled fly.

III.

Amid the shady woods and sunny lawns
The maiden and the youth now wander, gay
As the bright birds, and happy as the fawns,
Their sportive rivals, that around them play;

Their light hands linked in love, the golden hours
 Unconscious fly, while thus they graceful roam,
 And careless ever till the voice of home
 Recalled them from their sunshine and their flowers ;
 For then they parted : to his lonely pile
 The orphan-chief, for though his woe to lull,
 The maiden called him brother, her fond smile
 Gladdened another hearth, while his was dull.
 Yet as they parted, she reproved his sadness,
 And for her sake she gaily whispered gladness.

IV.

She was the daughter of a noble race,
 That beauteous girl, and yet she owed her name
 To one who needs no herald's skill to trace
 His blazoned lineage, for his lofty fame
 Lives in the mouth of men, and distant climes
 Re-echo his wide glory ; where the brave
 Are honoured, where 'tis noble deemed to save
 A prostrate nation, and for future times
 Work with a high devotion, that no taunt,
 Or ribald lie, or zealot's eager curse,
 Or the short-sighted world's neglect can daunt,
 That name is worshipped ! His immortal verse
 Blends with his god-like deeds, a double spell
 To bind the coming age he loved too well !

V.

For from his ancient home, a scatterling,
 They drove him forth, unconscious of their prize,
 And branded as a vile unhallowed thing,
 The man who struggled only to be wise.
 And even his hearth rebelled, the duteous wife
 Whose bosom well might soothe in that dark hour,
 Swelled with her gentle force the world's harsh power,
 And aimed her dart at his devoted life.
 That struck ; the rest his mighty soul might scorn,
 But when his household gods averted stood,
 'Twas the last pang that cannot well be borne
 When tortured e'en to torpor : his heart's blood
 Flowed to the unseen blow : then forth he went,
 And gloried in his ruthless banishment.

VI.

A new-born pledge of love within his home,
His alien home, the exiled father left;
And when, like Cain, he wandered forth to roam,
A Cain without his solace, all bereft :
Stole down his pallid cheek the scalding tear,
To think a stranger to his tender love
His child must grow, untroubled where might rove
His restless life, or taught perchance to fear
Her father's name, and bred in sullen hate,
Shrink from his image. Thus the gentle maid,
Who with her smiles had soothed an orphan's fate,
Had felt an orphan's pang ; yet undismayed,
Though taught to deem her sire the child of shame,
She clung with instinct to that reverent name !

VII.

Time flew ; the boy became a man, no more
His shadow falls upon his cloistered hall,
But to a stirring world he learn'd to pour
The passion of his being, skilled to call
From the deep caverns of his musing thought
Shadows to which they bowed, and on their mind
To stamp the image of his own ; the wind
Though all unseen, with force or odour fraught
Can sway mankind, and thus a poet's voice,
Now touched with sweetness, now inflamed with rage,
Though breath, can make us grieve and then rejoice ;
Such is the spell of his creative page,
That blends with all our moods ; and thoughts can yield
That all have felt, and yet till then were sealed.

VIII.

The lute is sounding in a chamber bright
With a high festival,—on every side,
Soft in the gleamy blaze of mellowed light,
Fair women smile, and dancers graceful glide ;
And words still sweeter than a serenade
Are breathed with guarded voice and speaking eyes,
By joyous hearts in spite of all their sighs ;
But bye-gone fantasies that ne'er can fade

Retain the pensive spirit of the youth ;
 Reclined against a column he surveys
 His laughing compeers with a glance, in sooth,
 Careless of all their mirth : for other days
 Enchain him with their vision, the bright hours
 Passed with the maiden in their sunny bowers.

IX.

Why turns his brow so pale, why starts to life
 That languid eye ? What form before unseen,
 With all the spells of hallowed memory rife,
 Now rises on his vision ? As the Queen
 Of Beauty from her bed of sparkling foam
 Sprang to the azure light ; and felt the air—
 Soft as her cheek, the wavy dancers bear
 To his rapt sight a mien that calls his home,
 His cloistered home, before him, with his dreams
 Prophetic strangely blending. The bright muse
 Of his dark childhood still divinely beams
 Upon his being ; glowing with the hues
 That painters love, when raptured pencils soar
 To trace a form that nations may adore !

X.

One word alone within her thrilling ear
 Breathed with hushed voice the brother of her heart,
 And that for aye is hidden. With a tear
 Smiling she strove to conquer, see her start,
 The bright blood rising to her quivering cheek,
 And meet the glance she hastened once to greet,
 When not a thought had he, save in her sweet
 And solacing society ; to seek
 Her smiles his only life ! Ah ! happy prime
 Of cloudless purity, no stormy fame
 His unknown sprite then stirred, a golden time
 Worth all the restless splendour of a name.
 And one soft accent from those gentle lips
 Might all the plaudits of a world eclipse.

XI.

My tale is done ; and if some deem it strange
 My fancy thus should droop, deign then to learn
 My tale is truth : imagination's range
 Its bounds exact may touch not : to discern

Far stranger things than poets ever feign,
 In life's perplexing annals, is the fate
 Of those who act, and musing, penetrate
 The mystery of Fortune: to whose reign
 The haughtiest brow must bend; 'twas passing strange
 The youth of these fond children; strange the flush
 Of his high fortunes and his spirit's change;
 Strange was the maiden's tear, the maiden's blush;
 Strange were his musing thoughts and trembling heart;
 'Tis strange they met, and stranger if they part!

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN Lady Monteagle discovered, which she did a very few hours after the mortifying event, where Lord Cadurcis had dined the day on which he had promised to be her guest, she was very indignant, but her vanity was more offended than her self-complacency. She was annoyed that Cadurcis should have compromised his exalted reputation by so publicly dangling in the train of the new beauty: still more that he should have signified in so marked a manner the impression which the fair stranger had made upon him, by instantly accepting an invitation to a house so totally unconnected with his circle, and where, had it not been to meet this Miss Herbert, it would of course never have entered his head to be a visitor. But, on the whole, Lady Monteagle was rather irritated than jealous; and far from suspecting that there was the slightest chance of her losing her influence, such as it might be, over Lord Cadurcis, all that she felt was, that less lustre must redound to her from its possession and exercise, if it were obvious to the world that his attentions could be so easily attracted and commanded.

When Lord Cadurcis, therefore, having dispatched his poem to Venetia, paid his usual visit on the next day to Monteagle House, he was received rather with sneers than reproaches, as her ladyship, with no superficial knowledge of society or his lordship's character, was clearly of opinion that this new fancy of her admirer was to be treated rather with ridicule than indignation; and, in short, as she had discovered that Cadurcis was far from being insensible to mockery, that it was clearly a fit occasion, to use a phrase then very much in vogue, for *quizzing*.

"How d'ye do," said her ladyship, with a very arch smile, "I really could not expect to see you!"

Cadurcis looked a little confused; he detested scenes, and now he dreaded one.

"You seem quite distrait," continued Lady Monteagle, after a moment's pause, which his lordship ought to have broken. "But no wonder, if the world be right."

"The world cannot be wrong," said Cadureis sarcastically.

"Had you a pleasant party yesterday?"

"Very."

"Lady —— must have been quite charmed to have you at last," said Lady Monteagle. "I suppose she exhibited you to all her friends, as if you were one of the savages that went to Court the other day."

"She was very courteous."

"Oh! I can fancy her flutter! For my part, if there be one character in the world more odious than another, I think it is a fussy woman. Lady ——, with Lord Cadureis dining with her, and the new beauty for a niece, must have been in a most delectable state of bustle."

"I thought she was rather quiet," said her companion with provoking indifference. "She seemed to me a very agreeable person."

"I suppose you mean Miss Herbert?" said Lady Monteagle.

"Oh! these are very moderate expressions to use in reference to a person like Miss Herbert."

"You know what they said of you two at Ranelagh?" said her ladyship.

"No," said Lord Cadureis, somewhat changing colour, and speaking through his teeth.—"Something devilish pleasant, I dare say."

"They call you Sedition and Treason," said Lady Monteagle.

"Then we are well suited," said Lord Cadureis.

"She certainly is a most beautiful creature," said her ladyship.

"I think so," said Lord Cadureis.

"Rather too tall, I think."

"Do you?"

"Beautiful complexion certainly; wants delicacy, I think."

"Do you?"

"Fine eyes? Grey, I believe. Cannot say I admire grey eyes. Certain sign of bad temper, I believe, grey eyes."

"Are they?"

"I did not observe her hand. I dare say a little coarse. Fair people who are tall generally fail in the hand and arm. What sort of a hand and arm has she?"

"I did not observe anything coarse about Miss Herbert."

"Ah! you admire her. And you have cause. No one can deny she is a fine girl, and every one must regret, that with her decidedly provincial air and want of style altogether, which might naturally be expected, considering the rustic way I understand she has been brought up, (an old house in the country, with a methodistical

mother,) that she should have fallen into such hands as her aunt. Lady —— is enough to spoil any girl's fortune in London."

"I thought that the —— were people of the highest consideration," said Lord Cadurcis.

"Consideration!" exclaimed Lady Monteagle. "If you mean that they are people of rank, and good blood, and good property, they are certainly people of consideration; but they are Goths, Vandals, Huns, Calmucks, Canadian savages! They have no fashion, no style, no ton, no influence in the world. It is impossible that a greater misfortune could have befallen your beauty than having such an aunt. Why, no man who has the slightest regard for his reputation would be seen in her company. She is a regular quizz, and you cannot imagine how everybody was laughing at you the other night."

"I am very much obliged to them," said Lord Cadurcis.

"And, upon my honour," continued Lady Monteagle, "speaking merely as your friend, and not being the least jealous—Cadurcis, do not suppose that—not a twinge has crossed my mind on that score; but still I must tell you that it was most ridiculous for a man like you, to whom everybody looks up, and from whom the slightest attention is an honour, to go and fasten yourself the whole night upon a rustic simpleton, something between a wax-doll and a dairy-maid, whom every fool in London was staring at; the very reason why you should not have appeared to have been even aware of her existence."

"We have all our moments of weakness, Gertrude," said Lord Cadurcis, perfectly charmed that the lady was so thoroughly unaware and unsuspecting of his long and intimate connection with the Herberts. I suppose it was my cursed vanity. I saw, as you say, every fool staring at her, and so I determined to show that in an instant I could engross her attention."

"Of course, I know it was only that; but you should not have gone and dined there, Cadurcis," added the lady, very seriously. "That compromised you; but, by cutting them in future in the most marked manner, you may get over it."

"You really think I may?" inquired Lord Cadurcis, with some anxiety.

"Oh! I have no doubt of it," said Lady Monteagle.

"What it is to have a friend like you, Gertrude," said Cadurcis, "a friend who is neither a Goth, nor a Vandal, nor a Hun, nor a Calmuck, nor a Canadian savage; but a woman of fashion, style, ton, influence in the world. It is impossible that a greater piece of good fortune could have befallen me than having you for a friend."

"Ah! méchant! you may mock," said the lady, triumphantly,

for she was quite satisfied with the turn the conversation had taken ; “ but I am glad for your sake that you take such a sensible view of the case.”

Notwithstanding, however, this sensible view of the case, after lounging an hour at Monteagle House, Lord Cadurcis’ carriage stopped at the door of Venetia’s Gothic aunt. He was not so fortunate as to meet his heroine ; but nevertheless he did not esteem his time entirely thrown away, and consoled himself for the disappointment by confirming the favourable impression he had already made in this establishment, and cultivating an intimacy which he was assured must contribute many opportunities of finding himself in the society of Venetia. From this day indeed he was a frequent guest at her uncle’s, and generally contrived also to meet her several times in the week at some great assembly ; but here, both from the occasional presence of Lady Monteagle, although party spirit deterred her from attending many circles where Cadurcis was now an habitual visitant, and from the crowd of admirers who surrounded the Herberts, he rarely found an opportunity for any private conversation with Venetia. His friend the Bishop also, notwithstanding the prejudices of Lady Annabel, received him always with cordiality, and he met the Herberts more than once at his mansion. At the opera and in the park also he hovered about them, in spite of the sarcasms or reproaches of Lady Monteagle ; for the reader is not to suppose that that lady continued to take the same self-complacent view of Lord Cadurcis’ acquaintance with the Herberts which she originally adopted, and at first flattered herself was the just one. His admiration of Miss Herbert had become the topic of general conversation ; it could no longer be concealed or disguised. But Lady Monteagle was convinced that Cadurcis was not a marrying man, and persuaded herself that this was a fancy which must evaporate. Moreover, Monteagle House still continued his spot of most constant resort ; for his opportunities of being with Venetia were, with all his exertions, limited, and he had no other resource which pleased him so much as the conversation and circle of the bright goddess of his party. After some fiery scenes therefore with the divinity, which only led to his prolonged absence, for the profound and fervent genius of Cadurcis revolted from the base sentiment and mock emotions of society, the lady reconciled herself to her lot, still believing herself the most envied woman in London, and often ashamed of being jealous of a country girl.

The general result of the fortnight which elapsed since Cadurcis renewed his acquaintance with his Cherbury friends was, that he had become convinced of his inability of propitiating Lady Annabel, was devotedly attached to Venetia, though he had seldom an opportunity of intimating feelings, which the cordial manner in which she

ever conducted herself to him gave him no reason to conclude desperate ; at the same time that he had contrived that a day should seldom elapse, which did not under some circumstances, however unfavourable, bring them together, while her intimate friends and the circles in which she passed most of her life always witnessed his presence with favour.

CHAPTER XIII.

WE must, however, endeavour to be more intimately acquainted with the heart and mind of Venetia in her present situation, so strongly contrasting with the serene simplicity of her former life, than the limited and constrained opportunities of conversing with the companion of his childhood enjoyed by Lord Cadurcis could possibly enable him to become. Let us recur to her on the night when she returned home, after having met with Plantagenet at her uncle's, and having pursued a conversation with him, so unexpected, so strange, and so affecting ! She had been very silent in the carriage, and retired to her room immediately. She retired to ponder. The voice of Cadurcis lingered in her ear ; his tearful eye still caught her vision. She leant her head upon her hand, and sighed ! Why did she sigh ? What at this instant was her uppermost thought ? Her mother's dislike of Cadurcis. " Your mother hates me." These had been his words ; these were the words she repeated to herself, and on whose fearful sounds she dwelt. " Your mother hates me." If by some means she had learnt a month ago at Weymouth, that her mother hated Cadurcis, that his general conduct had been such as to excite Lady Annabel's odium, Venetia might have for a moment been shocked that her old companion in whom she had once been so interested, had by his irregular behaviour incurred the dislike of her mother, by whom he had once been so loved. But it would have been a very transient emotion. She might have mused over past feelings and past hopes in a solitary ramble on the sea-shore ; she might even have shed a tear over the misfortunes or infelicity of one who had once been to her a brother ; but, perhaps, nay probably, on the morrow the remembrance of Plantagenet would scarcely have occurred to her. Long years had elapsed since their ancient fondness ; a very considerable interval since even his name had met her ear. She had heard nothing of him that could for a moment arrest her notice or command her attention.

But now the irresistible impression that her mother disliked this very individual filled her with intolerable grief. What occasioned

this change in her feelings, this extraordinary difference in her emotions? There was, apparently, but one cause. She had met Cadurcis. Could then a glance, could even the tender intonations of that unrivalled voice, and the dark passion of that speaking eye, work in an instant such marvels? Could they revive the past so vividly, that Plantagenet in a moment resumed his ancient place in her affections? No, it was not that: it was less the tenderness of the past that made Venetia mourn her mother's sternness to Cadurcis, than the feelings of the future. For now she felt that her mother's heart was not more changed towards this personage than was her own.

It seemed to Venetia that even before they met, from the very moment that his name had so strangely caught her eye in the volume on the first evening she had visited her relations, that her spirit suddenly turned to him. She had never heard that name mentioned since without a fluttering of the heart which she could not repress, and an emotion she could ill conceal. She loved to hear others talk of him, and yet scarcely dared speak of him herself. She recalled her emotion at unexpectedly seeing his portrait when with her aunt, and her mortification when her mother deprived her of the poem which she sighed to read. Day after day something seemed to have occurred to fix her brooding thoughts with fonder earnestness on his image. At length they met. Her emotion when she first recognised him at Ranelagh and felt him approaching her, was one of those tumults of the heart that form almost a crisis in our sensations. With what difficulty had she maintained herself! Doubtful whether he would even formally acknowledge her presence, her vision as if by fascination had nevertheless met his, and grew dizzy as he passed. In the interval that had elapsed between his first passing and then joining her, what a chaos was her mind! What a wild blending of all the scenes and incidents of her life! What random answers had she made to those with whom she had been before conversing with ease and animation! And then when she unexpectedly found Cadurcis at her side, and listened to the sound of that familiar voice, familiar and yet changed, expressing so much tenderness in its tones, and in its words such deference and delicate respect—existence felt to her that moment affluent with a blissful excitement of which she had never dreamed!

Her life was a reverie until they met again, in which she only mused over his fame, and the strange relations of their careers. She had watched the conduct of her mother to him at dinner with poignant sorrow; she scarcely believed that she should have an opportunity of expressing to him her sympathy. And then what had followed? A conversation, every word of which had touched

her heart; a conversation that would have entirely controlled her feelings even if he had not already subjected them. The tone in which he so suddenly had pronounced "Venetia," was the sweetest music to which she had ever listened. His allusion to her father had drawn tears, which could not be restrained even in a crowded saloon. Now she wept plentifully. It was so generous, so noble, so kind, so affectionate! Dear, dear Cadurcis, is it wonderful that you should be loved!

Then falling into a reverie of sweet and unbroken stillness, with her eyes fixed in abstraction on the fire, Venetia reviewed her life from the moment she had known Plantagenet. Not an incident that had ever occurred to them that did not rise obedient to her magical bidding. She loved to dwell upon the time when she was the consolation of his sorrows, and when Cherbury was to him a pleasant refuge! Oh! she felt sure her mother must remember those fond days, and love him as she once did! She pictured to herself the little Plantagenet of her childhood, so serious and so pensive when alone or with others, yet with her at times so gay and wild, and sarcastic: forebodings all of that deep and brilliant spirit, which had since stirred up the heart of a great nation, and dazzled the fancy of an admiring world. The change too in their mutual lots was also, to a degree, not free from that sympathy that had ever bound them together. A train of strange accidents had brought Venetia from her spell-bound seclusion, placed her suddenly in the most brilliant circle of civilization, and classed her among not the least admired of its favoured members. And whom had she come to meet? Whom did she find in this new and splendid life the most courted and considered of its community; crowned as it were with garlands, and perfumed with the incense of a thousand altars? Her own Plantagenet. It was passing strange.

The morrow brought the verses from Cadurcis. They greatly affected her. The picture of their childhood, and of the singular sympathy of their mutual situations, and the description of her father, called forth her tears; she murmured, however, at the allusion to her other parent. It was not just, it could not be true. These verses were not, of course, shown to Lady Annabel. Would they have been shown, even if they had not contained the allusion? The question is not perplexing. Venetia had her secret, and a far deeper one than the mere reception of a poem; all confidence between her and her mother had expired. Love had stepped in, and before his magic touch, the discipline of a life expired in an instant.

From all this an idea may be formed of the mood in which, during the fortnight before alluded to, Venetia was in the habit of

meeting Lord Cadurcis. During this period not the slightest conversation respecting him had occurred between her mother and herself. Lady Annabel never mentioned him, and her brow clouded when his name, as was often the case, was introduced. At the end of this fortnight, it happened that her aunt and mother were out together in the carriage, and had left her in the course of the morning at her uncle's house. During this interval, Lord Cadurcis called, and having ascertained, through a garrulous servant, that though his mistress was out, Miss Herbert was in the drawing-room, he immediately took the opportunity of being introduced. Venetia was not a little surprised at his appearance, and, conscious of her mother's feelings upon the subject, for a moment a little agitated, yet, it must be confessed, as much pleased. She seized this occasion of speaking to him about his verses, for hitherto she had only been able to acknowledge the receipt of them by a word. While she expressed without affectation the emotions they had occasioned her, she complained of his injustice to her mother: this was the cause of an interesting conversation of which her father was the subject, and for which she had long sighed. With what deep, unbroken attention she listened to her companion's enthusiastic delineation of his character and career! What multiplied questions did she not ask him, and how eagerly, how amply, how affectionately he satisfied her just and natural curiosity! Hours flew away while they indulged in this rare communion.

"Oh! that I could see him!" sighed Venetia.

"You will," replied Plantagenet, "your destiny requires it. You will see him as surely as you beheld that portrait that it was the labour of a life to prevent you beholding."

Venetia shook her head; "And yet," she added musingly, "my mother loves him."

"Her life proves it," said Cadurcis, bitterly.

"I think it does," replied Venetia, sincerely.

"I pretend not to understand her heart," he answered, "it is an enigma that I cannot solve. I ought not to believe that she is without one; but, at any rate, her pride is deeper than her love."

"They were ill suited," said Venetia, mournfully; "and yet it is one of my dreams that they may yet meet."

"Ah! Venetia," he exclaimed, in a voice of great softness, "they had not known each other from their childhood, like us. They met, and they parted, alike in haste."

Venetia made no reply; her eyes were fixed in abstraction on a hand-screen, which she was unconscious that she held.

"Tell me," said Cadurcis, drawing his chair close to hers; "tell me, Venetia, if——"

At this moment a thundering knock at the door announced

the return of the Countess and her sister-in-law. Cadureis rose from his seat, but his chair, which still remained close to that on which Venetia was sitting, did not escape the quick glance of her mortified mother. The Countess welcomed Cadureis with extreme cordiality; Lady Annabel only returned his very courteous bow.

"Stop and dine with us, my dear Lord," said the Countess. "We are only ourselves, and Lady Annabel and Venetia."

"I thank you, Clara," said Lady Annabel, "but we cannot stop to-day."

"Oh!" exclaimed her sister. "It will be such a disappointment to Philip. Indeed you must stay," she added, in a coaxing tone; "we shall be such an agreeable little party, with Lord Cadureis."

"I cannot, indeed, my dear Clara," replied Lady Annabel; "not to-day, indeed not to-day. Come Venetia!"

CHAPTER XIV.

LADY ANNABEL was particularly kind to Venetia on their return to their hotel, otherwise her daughter might have fancied that she had offended her, for she was very silent. Venetia did not doubt that the presence of Lord Cadureis was the reason that her mother would not remain and dine at her uncle's. This conviction grieved Venetia, but she did not repine; she indulged the fond hope that time would remove the strong prejudice which Lady Annabel now so singularly entertained against one in whose welfare she was originally so deeply interested. During their simple and short repast Venetia was occupied in a reverie, in which, it must be owned, Cadureis greatly figured, and answered the occasional though kind remarks of her mother with an absent air.

After dinner, Lady Annabel drew her chair towards the fire—for although May, the weather was chill—and said, "A quiet evening at home, Venetia, will be a relief after all this gaiety." Venetia assented to her mother's observation, and nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed without another word being spoken. Venetia had taken up a book, and Lady Annabel was apparently lost in her reflections. At length she said, somewhat abruptly, "It is more than three years, I think, since Lord Cadureis left Cherbury?"

"Yes; it is more than three years," replied Venetia.

"He quitted us suddenly."

"Very suddenly," agreed Venetia.

"I never asked you whether you knew the cause, Venetia," continued her mother, "but I always concluded that you did. I suppose I was not in error?"

This was not a very agreeable inquiry. Venetia did not reply to it with her previous readiness and indifference. That indeed was impossible; but, with her accustomed frankness, after a moment's hesitation, she answered, "Lord Cadurcis never specifically stated the cause to me, mamma; indeed I was myself surprised at his departure, but some conversation had occurred between us on the very morning he quitted Cadurcis, which, on reflection, I could not doubt occasioned that departure."

"Lord Cadurcis preferred his suit to you, Venetia, and you rejected him?" said Lady Annabel.

"It is as you believe," replied Venetia, not a little agitated.

"You did wisely, my child, and I was weak ever to have regretted your conduct."

"Why should you think so, dearest mamma?"

"Whatever may have been the cause that impelled your conduct then," said Lady Annabel, "I shall ever esteem your decision as a signal interposition of Providence in your favour. Except his extreme youth, there was apparently no reason which should not have induced you to adopt a very different decision. I tremble when I think what might have been the consequences."

"Tremble! dearest mother?"

"Tremble, Venetia. My only thought in this life is the happiness of my child. It was in peril."

"Nay, I trust not that, mamma: you are prejudiced against Plantagenet. It makes me very unhappy, and him also."

"He is again your suitor?" said Lady Annabel, with a scrutinising glance.

"Indeed he is not."

"He will be," said Lady Annabel. "Prepare yourself. Tell me, then, are your feelings the same towards him as when he last quitted us?"

"Feelings, mamma!" said Venetia, echoing her mother's words; for indeed the question was one very difficult to answer; "I ever loved Plantagenet; I love him still."

"But do you love him now as then? Then you looked upon him as a brother. He has no soul now for sisterly affections. I beseech you tell me, my child—me, your mother, your friend, your best, your only friend—tell me, have you for a moment repented that you ever refused to extend to him any other affection?"

"I have not thought of the subject, mamma; I have not wished to think of the subject; I have had no occasion to think of it. Lord Cadurcis is not my suitor now."

"Venetia!" said Lady Annabel, "I cannot doubt you love me."

"Dearest mother!" exclaimed Venetia, in a tone of mingled

fondness and reproach, and she rose from her seat and embraced Lady Annabel.

"My happiness is an object to you, Venetia?" continued Lady Annabel.

"Mother, mother," said Venetia, in a deprecatory tone. "Do not ask such cruel questions! Whom should I love but you, the best, the dearest mother that ever existed! And what object can I have in life that for a moment can be placed in competition with your happiness?"

"Then, Venetia, I tell you," said Lady Annabel, in a solemn, yet excited voice, "that that happiness is gone for ever, nay, my very life will be the forfeit, if I ever live to see you the bride of Lord Cadurcis."

"I have no thought of being the bride of any one," said Venetia, "I am happy with you. I wish never to leave you."

"My child, the fulfilment of such a wish is not in the nature of things," replied Lady Annabel. "The day will come when we must part; I am prepared for the event—nay, I look forward to it not only with resignation, but delight, when I think it may increase your happiness; but were that step to destroy it—oh! then, then I could live no more. I can endure my own sorrows, I can struggle with my own bitter lot, I have some sources of consolation which enable me to endure my own misery without repining, but yours, yours, Venetia, I could not bear. No! if once I were to behold you lingering in life as your mother, with blighted hopes and with a heart broken, if hearts can break, I should not survive the spectacle; I know myself, Venetia, I could not survive it."

"But why anticipate such misery? Why indulge in such gloomy forebodings? Am I not happy now? Do you not love me?"

Venetia had drawn her chair close to that of her mother; she sat by her side and held her hand.

"Venetia," said Lady Annabel, after a pause of some minutes, and in a low voice, "I must speak to you on a subject on which we have never conversed. I must speak to you," and here Lady Annabel's voice dropped lower and lower, but still its tones were very distinct, although she expressed herself with evident effort—"I must speak to you about—your father."

Venetia uttered a faint cry, she clenched her mother's hand with a convulsive grasp, and sank upon her bosom. She struggled to maintain herself, but the first sound of that name from her mother's lips, and all the long-suppressed emotions that it conjured up, overpowered her. The blood seemed to desert her heart; still she did not faint; she clung to Lady Annabel, pallid and shivering.

Her mother tenderly embraced her, she whispered to her words

of great affection, she attempted to comfort and console her. Venetia murmured, "This is very foolish of me, mother; but speak, oh! speak of what I have so long desired to hear."

"Not now, Venetia!"

"Now, mother! yes, now! I am quite composed. I could not bear the postponement of what you were about to say. I could not sleep, dear mother, if you did not speak to me. It was only for a moment I was overcome. See! I am quite composed." And indeed she spoke in a calm and steady voice, but her pale and suffering countenance expressed the painful struggle which it cost her to command herself.

"Venetia," said Lady Annabel, "it has been one of the objects of my life, that you should not share my sorrows."

Venetia pressed her mother's hand, but made no other reply.

"I concealed from you for years," continued Lady Annabel, "a circumstance in which, indeed, you were deeply interested, but the knowledge of which could only bring you unhappiness. Yet it was destined that my solicitude should eventually be baffled. I know that it is not from my lips that you learn for the first time that you have a father—a father living."

"Mother, let me tell you all!" said Venetia, eagerly.

"I know all," said Lady Annabel.

"But, mother, there is something that you do not know; and now I would confess it."

"There is nothing that you can confess with which I am not acquainted, Venetia; and I feel assured, I have ever felt assured, that your only reason for concealment was a desire to save me pain."

"That, indeed, has ever been my only motive," replied Venetia, "for having a secret from my mother."

"In my absence from Cherbury, you entered the chamber," said Lady Annabel, very calmly. "In the delirium of your fever, I became acquainted with a circumstance which so nearly proved fatal to you."

Venetia's cheek turned scarlet.

"In that chamber you beheld the portrait of your father," continued Lady Annabel. "From our friend you learnt that father was still living. That is all?" said Lady Annabel, inquiringly.

"No, not all, dear mother; not all. Lord Cadurcis reproached me at Cherbury with—with—with having such a father," she added, in a hesitating voice. "It was then I learnt—his misfortunes, mother; his misery."

"I thought that misfortunes, that misery, were the lot of your other parent," replied Lady Annabel, somewhat coldly.

"Not with my love," said Venetia, eagerly; "not with my love, mother. You have forgotten your misery in my love. Say so, say so, dearest mother." And Venetia threw herself on her knees before Lady Annabel, and looked up with earnestness in her face.

The expression of that countenance had been for a moment stern, but it relaxed into fondness, as Lady Annabel gently bowed her head, and pressed her lips to her daughter's forehead. "Ah! Venetia," she said, "all depends upon you. I can endure, nay, I can forget the past, if my child be faithful to me. There are no misfortunes, there is no misery, if the being to whom I have consecrated the devotion of my life will only be dutiful, will only be guided by my advice, will only profit by my sad experience."

"Mother, I repeat I have no thought but for you," said Venetia. "My own dearest mother, if my duty, if my devotion can content you, you shall be happy. But wherein have I failed?"

"In nothing, love. Your life has hitherto been one unbroken course of affectionate obedience."

"And ever shall be," said Venetia. "But you were speaking, mother, you were speaking of—of my—my father!"

"Of him!" said Lady Annabel, thoughtfully. "You have seen his picture?"

Venetia kissed her mother's hand.

"Was he less beautiful than Cadurcis? Was he less gifted?" exclaimed Lady Annabel, with animation. "He could whisper in tones as sweet, and pour out his vows as fervently. Yet what am I? O! my child," continued Lady Annabel, "beware of such beings! They bear within them a spirit on which all the devotion of our sex is lavished in vain. A year—no! not a year, not one short year!—and all my hopes were blighted! Oh! Venetia, if your future should be like my bitter past!—and it might have been, and I might have contributed to the fulfilment!—can you wonder that I should look upon Cadurcis with aversion?"

"But, mother, dearest mother, we have known Plantagenet from his childhood. You ever loved him; you ever gave him credit for a heart—most tender and affectionate."

"He has no heart."

"Mother!"

"He cannot have a heart. Spirits like him are heartless. It is another impulse that sways their existence. It is imagination; it is vanity; it is self, disguised with glittering qualities that dazzle our weak senses, but selfishness, the most entire, the most concentrated. We knew him as a child,—ah! what can women know. We are born to love, and to be deceived. We saw him young, helpless, abandoned;—he moved our pity. We knew not his na-

ture; then he was ignorant of it himself. But the young tiger, though cradled at our hearths and fed on milk, will in good time retire to its jungle and prey on blood. You cannot change its nature; and the very hand that fostered it will be its first victim."

"How often have we parted!" said Venetia, in a deprecating tone; "how long have we been separated! and yet we find him ever the same; he ever loves us. Yes! dear mother, he loves you now, the same as in old days. If you had seen him, as I have seen him, weep when he recalled your promise to be a parent to him, and then contrasted with such sweet hopes your present reserve, oh! you would believe he had a heart, you would, indeed!"

"Weep!" exclaimed Lady Annabel, bitterly, "ay! they can weep. Sensibility is a luxury which they love to indulge. Their very susceptibility is our bane. They can weep; they can play upon our feelings: and our emotion, so easily excited, is an homage to their own power, in which they glory."

"Look at Cadurcis," she suddenly resumed; "bred with so much care; the soundest principles instilled into him with such sedulousness; imbibing them apparently with so much intelligence, ardour, and sincerity, with all that fervour, indeed, with which men of his temperament for the moment pursue every object; but a few years back, pious, dutiful, and moral, viewing perhaps with intolerance too youthful all that differed from the opinions and the conduct he had been educated to admire and follow. And what is he now? The most lawless of the wild; casting to the winds every salutary principle of restraint and social discipline, and glorying only in the abandoned energy of self. Three years ago, you yourself confess to me, he reproached you with your father's conduct; now he emulates it. There is a career which such men must run, and from which no influence can divert them; it is in their blood. To-day Cadurcis may vow to you eternal devotion; but, if the world speak truth, Venetia, a month ago he was equally enamoured of another—and one, too, who cannot be his. But grant that his sentiments towards you are for the moment sincere; his imagination broods upon your idea, it transfigures it with a halo which exists only to his vision. Yield to him; become his bride; and you will have the mortification of finding that, before six months have elapsed, his restless spirit is already occupied with objects which may excite your mortification, your disgust, even your horror!"

"Ah! mother, it is not with Plantagenet as with my father; Plantagenet could not forget Cherbury, he could not forget our childhood," said Venetia.

"On the contrary, while you lived together these recollections would be wearisome, common-place to him; when you had separated,

indeed, mellowed by distance, and the comparative vagueness with which your absence would invest them, they would become the objects of his muse, and he would insult you by making the public the confidant of all your most delicate domestic feelings."

Lady Annabel rose from her seat, and walked up and down the room, speaking with an excitement very unusual with her. "To have all the soft secrets of your life revealed to the coarse wonder of the gloating multitude; to find yourself the object of the world's curiosity—still worse, their pity, their sympathy; to have the sacred conduct of your hearth canvassed in every circle, and be the grand subject of the pros and cons of every paltry journal,—ah! Venetia, you know not, you cannot understand, it is impossible you can comprehend, the bitterness of such a lot."

"My beloved mother!" said Venetia, with streaming eyes, "you cannot have a feeling that I do not share."

"Venetia, you know not what I had to endure!" exclaimed Lady Annabel, in a tone of extreme bitterness. "There is no degree of wretchedness that you can conceive equal to what has been the life of your mother. And what has sustained me—what, throughout all my tumultuous troubles, has been the star on which I have ever gazed?—My child! And am I to lose her now, after all my sufferings, all my hopes that she at least might be spared my miserable doom! Am I to witness her also a victim!" Lady Annabel clasped her hands in passionate grief.

"Mother! mother!" exclaimed Venetia, in agony, "spare yourself, spare me!"

"Venetia, you know how I have doated upon you; you know how I have watched and tended you from your infancy. Have I had a thought, a wish, a hope, a plan?—has there been the slightest action of my life, of which you have not been the object? All mothers feel, but none ever felt like me: you were my solitary joy."

Venetia leant her face upon the table at which she was sitting, and sobbed aloud.

"My love was baffled," Lady Annabel continued. "I fled, for both our sakes, from the world in which my family were honoured;—I sacrificed without a sigh, in the very prime of my youth, every pursuit which interests woman; but I had my child—I had my child!"

"And you have her still!" exclaimed the miserable Venetia. "Mother, you have her still!"

"I have schooled my mind," continued Lady Annabel, still pacing the room with agitated steps; "I have disciplined my emotions; I have felt at my heart the constant, the undying pang, and yet I

have smiled, that you might be happy. But I can struggle against my fate no longer. No longer can I suffer my unparalleled,—yes, my unjust doom. What have I done to merit these afflictions?—Now, then, let me struggle no more; let me die!”

Venetia tried to rise; her limbs refused their office; she tottered; she fell again into her seat with an hysteric cry.

“Alas! alas!” exclaimed Lady Annabel, “to a mother, a child is everything; but to a child, a parent is only a link in the chain of her existence. It was weakness, it was folly, it was madness to stake everything on a resource which must fail me. I feel it now, but I feel it too late.”

Venetia held forth her arms; she could not speak; she was stifled with her emotion.

“But was it wonderful that I was so weak?” continued her mother, as it were communing only with herself. “What child was like mine? Oh! the joy, the bliss, the hours of rapture that I have passed, in gazing upon my treasure, and dreaming of all her beauty and her rare qualities! I was so happy!—I was so proud! Ah! Venetia, you know not how I have loved you!”

Venetia sprang from her seat; she rushed forward with convulsive energy; she clung to her mother, threw her arms round her neck, and buried her passionate woe in Lady Annabel’s bosom.

Lady Annabel stood for some minutes supporting her speechless and agitated child; then, as her sobs became fainter, and the tumult of her grief gradually died away, she bore her to the sofa, and seated herself by her side, holding Venetia’s hand in her own, and ever and anon soothing her with soft embraces, and still softer words.

At length, in a faint voice, Venetia said, “Mother, what can I do to restore the past? How can we be to each other as we were? for this I cannot bear.”

“Love me, my Venetia, as I love you; be faithful to your mother; do not disregard her counsel; profit by her errors.”

“I will in all things obey you,” said Venetia, in a low voice; “there is no sacrifice I am not prepared to make, for your happiness.”

“Let us not talk of sacrifices, my darling child; it is not a sacrifice that I require. I wish only to prevent your everlasting misery.”

“What, then, shall I do?”

“Make me only one promise; whatever pledge you give, I feel assured that no influence, Venetia, will ever induce you to forfeit it.”

“Name it, mother.”

“Promise me never to marry Lord Cadurcis,” said Lady Annabel

in a whisper, but a whisper of which not a word was lost by the person to whom it was addressed.

"I promise never to marry, but with your approbation," said Venetia, in a solemn voice, and uttering the words with great distinctness.

The countenance of Lady Annabel instantly brightened; she embraced her child with extreme fondness, and breathed the softest and the sweetest expressions of gratitude and love.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN Lady Monteagle discovered that of which her good-natured friends took care she should not long remain ignorant,—that Venetia Herbert had been the companion of Lord Cadurcis' childhood, and that the most intimate relations had once subsisted between the two families,—she became the prey of violent jealousy; and the bitterness of her feelings was not a little increased, when she felt that she had not only been abandoned, but duped; and that the new beauty, out of his fancy for whom she had flattered herself she had so triumphantly rallied him, was an old friend, whom he always admired. She seized the first occasion, after this discovery, of relieving her feelings, by a scene so violent, that Cadurcis had never again entered Monteagle House; and then repenting of this mortifying result, which she had herself precipitated, she overwhelmed him with letters, which, next to scenes, were the very things which Lord Cadurcis most heartily abhorred. These,—now indignant, now passionate, now loading him with reproaches, now appealing to his love, and now to his pity,—daily arrived at his residence, and were greeted at first only with short and sarcastic replies, and finally by silence. Then the lady solicited a final interview, and Lord Cadurcis having made an appointment to quiet her, went out of town the day before to Richmond, to a villa belonging to Venetia's uncle, and where, among other guests, he was of course to meet Lady Annabel and her daughter.

The party was a most agreeable one, and assumed an additional interest with Cadurcis, who had resolved to seize this favourable opportunity to bring his aspirations to Venetia to a crisis. The day after the last conversation with her, which we have noticed, he had indeed boldly called upon the Herberts at their hotel for that purpose, but without success, as they were again absent from home. He had been since almost daily in the society of Venetia; but London, to a lover who is not smiled upon by the domestic circle of his mis-

tress, is a very unfavourable spot for confidential conversations. A villa life, with its easy, unembarrassed habits, its gardens and lounging walks, to say nothing of the increased opportunities resulting from being together at all hours, and living under the same roof, was more promising; and here he flattered himself he might defy even the Argus eye and ceaseless vigilance of his intended mother-in-law, his enemy, whom he could not propitiate, and whom he now fairly hated.

His cousin George, too, was a guest, and his cousin George was the confidant of his love. Upon this kind relation devolved the duty—far from a disagreeable one—of amusing the mother; and as Lady Annabel, though she relaxed not a jot of the grim courtesy which she ever extended to Lord Cadurcis, was no longer seriously uneasy as to his influence after the promise she had exacted from her daughter, it would seem that these circumstances combined to prevent Lord Cadurcis from being disappointed at least in the first object which he wished to obtain—an opportunity.

And yet several days elapsed before this offered itself,—passed by Cadurcis, however, very pleasantly in the presence of the being he loved, and very judiciously too, for no one could possibly be more amiable and ingratiating than our friend. Every one present, except Lady Annabel, appeared to entertain for him as much affection as admiration: those who had only met him in throngs were quite surprised how their superficial observation and the delusive reports of the world had misled them. As for his hostess, whom it had ever been his study to please, he had long won her heart; and, as she could not be blind to his projects and pretensions, she heartily wished him success, assisted him with all her efforts, and desired nothing more sincerely than that her niece should achieve such a conquest, and she obtain so distinguished a nephew.

Notwithstanding her promise to her mother, Venetia felt justified in making no alteration in her conduct to one whom she still sincerely loved; and, under the immediate influence of his fascination, it was often, when she was alone, that she mourned with a sorrowing heart over the opinion which her mother entertained of him. Could it indeed be possible that Plantagenet—the same Plantagenet she had known so early and so long, to her invariably so tender and so devoted—could entail on her, by their union, such unspeakable and inevitable misery? Whatever might be the view adopted by her mother of her conduct, Venetia felt every hour more keenly that it was a sacrifice, and the greatest; and she still indulged in a vague yet delicious dream, that Lady Annabel might ultimately withdraw the harsh and perhaps heart-breaking interdiction she had so rigidly decreed.

“Cadurcis,” said his cousin to him one morning, “we are all

going to Hampton Court. Now is your time ; Lady Annabel, the Vernons, and myself, will fill one carriage ; I have arranged that. Look out, and something may be done. Speak to the Countess."

Accordingly Lord Cadurcis hastened to make a suggestion to a friend always flattered by his notice. "My dear friend," he said in his softest tone, "let you and Venetia and myself manage to be together ; it will be so delightful ; we shall quite enjoy ourselves."

The Countess did not require this animating compliment to effect the object which Cadurcis did not express. She had gradually fallen into the unacknowledged conspiracy against her sister-in-law, whose prejudice against her friend she had long discovered, and had now ceased to combat. Two carriages, and one filled as George had arranged, accordingly drove gaily away ; and Venetia, and her aunt, and Lord Cadurcis, were to follow them on horseback. They rode with delight through the splendid avenues of Bushey, and Cadurcis was never in a lighter or happier mood.

The month of May was in its decline, and the cloudless sky and the balmy air such as suited so agreeable a season. The London season was approaching its close ; for the royal birthday was, at the period of our history, generally the signal of preparation for country quarters. The carriages arrived long before the riding party, for they had walked their steeds, and they found a messenger who requested them to join their friends in the apartments which they were visiting.

"For my part," said Cadurcis, "I love the sun that rarely shines in this land. I feel no inclination to lose the golden hours in these gloomy rooms. What say you, ladies fair, to a stroll in the gardens ? It will be doubly charming after our ride."

His companions cheerfully assented, and they walked away, congratulating themselves on their escape from the wearisome amusement of palace-hunting, straining their eyes to see pictures hung at a gigantic height, and solemnly wandering through formal apartments full of state beds and massy cabinets and modern armour.

Taking their way along the terrace, they struck at length into a less formal path. At length the Countess seated herself on a bench. "I must rest," she said, "but you, young people, may roam about ; only do not lose me."

"Come, Venetia !" said Lord Cadurcis.

Venetia was hesitating ; she did not like to leave her aunt alone, but the Countess encouraged her. "If you will not go, you will only make me continue walking," she said. And so Venetia proceeded, and for the first time since her visit was alone with Plantagenet.

"I quite love your aunt," said Lord Cadurcis.

"It is difficult indeed not to love her," said Venetia.

"Ah! Venetia, I wish your mother was like your aunt," he continued. It was an observation which was not heard without some emotion by his companion, though it was imperceptible. "Venetia," said Cadurcis, "when I recollect old days, how strange it seems that we now never should be alone, but by some mere accident, like this, for instance."

"It is no use thinking of old days," said Venetia.

"No use!" said Cadurcis. "I do not like to hear you say that, Venetia. Those are some of the least agreeable words that were ever uttered by that mouth. I cling to old days; they are my only joy and my only hope."

"They are gone," said Venetia.

"But may they not return?" said Cadurcis.

"Never," said Venetia, mournfully.

They had walked on to a marble fountain of gigantic proportions and elaborate workmanship, an assemblage of divinities and genii, all spouting water in fantastic attitudes.

"Old days," said Plantagenet, "are like the old fountain at Cadurcis, dearer to me than all this modern splendour."

"The old fountain at Cadurcis," said Venetia, musingly, and gazing on the water with an abstracted air, "I loved it well!"

"Venetia," said her companion, in a tone of extreme tenderness, yet not untouched with melancholy, "dear Venetia, let us return, and return together, to that old fountain and those old days!"

Venetia shook her head. "Ah! Plantagenet," she exclaimed in a mournful voice, "we must not speak of these things."

"Why, not, Venetia?" exclaimed Lord Cadurcis, eagerly. "Why should we be estranged from each other? I love you; I love only you; never have I loved another. And you—have you forgotten all our youthful affection? You cannot, Venetia. Our childhood can never be a blank."

"I told you, when first we met, my heart was unchanged," said Venetia, in a very serious tone.

"Remember the vows I made to you when last at Cherbury," said Cadurcis. "Years have flown on, Venetia; but they find me urging the same. At any rate, now I know myself; at any rate, I am not now an obscure boy; yet what is manhood, and what is fame, without the charm of my infancy and my youth! Yes! Venetia, you must—you will be mine?"

"Plantagenet," she replied, in a solemn tone, "yours I never can be."

"You do not, then, love me?" said Cadurcis reproachfully, and in a voice of great feeling.

"It is impossible for you to be loved more than I love you," said Venetia.

"My own Venetia!" said Cadurcis; "Venetia that I dote on! what does this mean? Why, then, will you not be mine?"

"I cannot; there is an obstacle—an insuperable obstacle."

"Tell it me," said Cadurcis eagerly; "I will overcome it."

"I have promised never to marry without the approbation of my mother; her approbation you never can obtain."

Cadurcis' countenance fell; this was an obstacle which he felt that even he could not overcome.

"I told you your mother hated me, Venetia." And then, as she did not reply, he continued, "You confess it, I see you confess it. Once you flattered me I was mistaken; but now, now you confess it."

"Hatred is a word which I cannot understand," replied Venetia. "My mother has reasons for disapproving my union with you; not founded on the circumstances of your life, and therefore removable—for I know what the world says, Plantagenet, of you—but I have confidence in your love, and that is nothing; but founded on your character, on your nature; they may be unjust, but they are insuperable, and I must yield to them."

"You have another parent, Venetia," said Cadurcis, in a tone of almost irresistible softness, "the best and greatest of men! Once you told me that his sanction was necessary to your marriage. I will obtain it. Oh! Venetia, be mine, and we will join him; join that ill-fated and illustrious being who loves you with a passion second only to mine; him who has addressed you in language which rests on every lip, and has thrilled many a heart that you even can never know. My adored Venetia, picture to yourself, for one moment, a life with him; resting on my bosom, consecrated by his paternal love! Let us quit this mean and miserable existence, which we now pursue, which never could have suited us; let us shun for ever this dull and degrading life, that is not life, if life be what I deem it; let us fly to those beautiful solitudes where he communes with an inspiring nature; let us—let us be happy!"

He uttered these last words in a tone of melting tenderness; he leant forward his head, and his gaze caught hers, which was fixed upon the water. Her hand was pressed suddenly in his; his eye glittered, his lip seemed still speaking; he awaited his doom.

The countenance of Venetia was quite pale, but it was disturbed. You might see, as it were, the shadowy progress of thought, and mark the tumultuous passage of conflicting passions. Her mind, for a moment, was indeed a chaos. There was a terrible conflict between love and duty. At length a tear, one solitary tear, burst

from her burning eye-ball, and stole slowly down her cheek; it relieved her pain. She pressed Cadurcis' hand, and speaking in a hollow voice, and with a look vague and painful, she said, "I am a victim, but I am resolved. I never will desert her who devoted herself to me."

Cadurcis quitted her hand rather abruptly, and began walking up and down on the turf that surrounded the fountain.

"Devoted herself to you!" he exclaimed with a fiendish laugh, and speaking, as was his custom, between his teeth. "Commend me to such devotion. Not content with depriving you of a father, now forsooth she must bereave you of a lover too! And this is a mother, a devoted mother! The cold-blooded, sullen, selfish, inexorable tyrant!"

"Plantagenet!" exclaimed Venetia with great animation.

"Nay, I will speak. Victim, indeed! You have ever been her slave. She a devoted mother! Ay! as devoted as a mother as she was dutiful as a wife! She has no heart; she never had a feeling. And she cajoles you with her love, her devotion—the stern hypocrite!"

"I must leave you," said Venetia; "I cannot bear this."

"Oh! the truth, the truth is precious," said Cadurcis, taking her hand, and preventing her from moving. "Your mother, your devoted mother, has driven one man of genius from her bosom, and his country. Yet there is another. Deny me what I ask, and tomorrow's sun shall light me to another land; to this I will never return; I will blend my tears with your father's, and I will publish to Europe the double infamy of your mother. I swear it solemnly. Still I stand here, Venetia; prepared, if you will but smile upon me, to be her son, her dutiful son. Nay! her slave like you. She shall not murmur. I will be dutiful; she shall be devoted; we will all be happy," he added in a softer tone. "Now, now, Venetia, my happiness is on the stake, now, now."

"I have spoken," said Venetia. "My heart may break, but my purpose shall not falter."

"Then my curse upon your mother's head!" said Cadurcis, with terrible vehemency. "May Heaven rain all its plagues upon her! The Hecate!"

"I will listen no more," exclaimed Venetia indignantly, and she moved away. She had proceeded some little distance when she paused and looked back; Cadurcis was still at the fountain, but he did not observe her. She remembered his sudden departure from Cherbury, she did not doubt that, in the present instance, he would leave them as abruptly, and that he would keep his word so solemnly given. Her heart was nearly breaking, but she could not bear the idea of parting in bitterness with the being whom, perhaps, she

loved best in the world. She stopt, she called his name in a voice low indeed, but in that silent spot it reached him. He joined her immediately, but with a slow step. When he had reached her, he said, without any animation and in a frigid tone, "I believe you called me?"

Venetia burst into tears. "I cannot bear to part in anger, Plantagenet. I wished to say farewell in kindness. I shall always pray for your happiness. God bless you, Plantagenet!"

Lord Cadurcis made no reply, though for a moment he seemed about to speak; he bowed, and as Venetia approached her aunt, he turned his steps in a different direction.

CHAPTER XVI.

VENETIA stopped for a moment to collect herself before she joined her aunt, but it was impossible to conceal her agitation from the Countess. They had not, however, been long together before they observed their friends in the distance, who had now quitted the palace. Venetia made the utmost efforts to compose herself, and not unsuccessful ones. She was sufficiently calm on their arrival, to listen, if not to converse. The Countess, with all the tact of a woman, covered her niece's confusion by her animated description of their agreeable ride, and their still more pleasant promenade; and in a few minutes the whole party were walking back to their carriages. When they had arrived at the inn, they found Lord Cadurcis, to whose temporary absence the Countess had alluded with some casual observation which she flattered herself was very satisfactory. Cadurcis appeared rather sullen, and the Countess, with feminine quickness, suddenly discovered that both herself and her niece were extremely fatigued, and that they had better return in the carriages. There was one vacant place, and some of the gentlemen must ride outside. Lord Cadurcis, however, said that he should return as he came, and the grooms might lead back the ladies' horses: and so in a few minutes the carriages had driven off.

Our solitary equestrian, however, was no sooner mounted than he put his horse to its speed, and never drew in his rein until he reached Hyde Park Corner. The rapid motion accorded with his tumultuous mood. He was soon at home, gave his horse to a servant, for he had left his groom behind, rushed into his library, tore up a letter of Lady Montague's with a demoniac glance, and rang his bell with such force that it broke. His valet, not unused to such ebullitions, immediately appeared.

"Has anything happened, Spalding?" said his lordship.

"Nothing particular, my lord. Her ladyship sent every day, and called herself twice, but I told her your lordship was in Yorkshire."

"That was right; I saw a letter from her. When did it come?"

"It has been here several days, my lord."

"Mind, I am at home to nobody; I am not in town."

The valet bowed and disappeared. Cadurcis threw himself into an easy chair, stretched his legs, sighed, and then swore; then suddenly starting up, he seized a mass of letters that were lying on the table, and hurled them to the other end of the apartment, dashed several books to the ground, kicked down several chairs that were in his way, and began pacing the room with his usual troubled step; and so he continued until the shades of twilight entered his apartment. Then he pulled down the other bell-rope, and Mr. Spalding again appeared.

"Order post-horses for to-morrow," said his lordship.

"Where to, my lord?"

"I don't know; order the horses."

Mr. Spalding again bowed and disappeared.

In a few minutes he heard a great stamping and confusion in his master's apartment, and presently the door opened and his master's voice was heard calling him repeatedly in a very irritable tone.

"Why are there no bells in this cursed room?" inquired Lord Cadurcis.

"The ropes are broken, my lord."

"Why are they broken?"

"I can't say, my lord."

"I cannot leave this house for a day but I find everything in confusion. Bring me some Burgundy."

"Yes, my lord. There is a young lad, my lord, called a few minutes back, and asked for your lordship. He says he has something very particular to say to your lordship. I told him your lordship was out of town. He said your lordship would wish very much to see him, and that he had come from the Abbey."

"The Abbey!" said Cadurcis, in a tone of curiosity. "Why did you not show him in?"

"Your lordship said you were not at home to anybody."

"Idiot! Is this anybody? Of course I would have seen him. What the devil do I keep you for, sir? You seem to me to have lost your head."

Mr. Spalding retired.

"The Abbey! that is droll," said Cadurcis. "I owe some duties to the poor Abbey. I should not like to quit England, and leave anybody in trouble at the Abbey. I wish I had seen the lad. Some

son of a tenant who has written to me, and I have never opened his letters. I am sorry."

In a few minutes Mr. Spalding again entered the room. "The young lad has called again, my lord. He says he thinks your lordship has come to town, and he wishes to see your lordship very much."

"Bring lights and show him up. Show him up first."

Accordingly, a country lad was ushered into the room, although it was so dusky that Cadurcis could only observe his figure standing at the door.

"Well, my good fellow," said Cadurcis; "what do you want? Are you in any trouble?"

The boy hesitated.

"Speak out, my good fellow; do not be alarmed. If I can serve you, or any one at the Abbey, I will do it."

Here Mr. Spalding entered with the lights. The lad held a cotton handkerchief to his face; he appeared to be weeping; all that was seen of his head were his locks of red hair. He seemed a country lad, dressed in a long green coat with silver buttons, and he twirled in his disengaged hand a peasant's white hat.

"That will do, Spalding," said Lord Cadurcis. "Leave the room. Now my good fellow, my time is precious; but speak out, and do not be afraid."

"Cadurcis!" said the lad in a sweet and trembling voice.

"Gertrude, by G—d!" exclaimed Lord Cadurcis, starting. "What infernal masquerade is this?"

"Is it a greater disguise than I have to bear every hour of my life?" exclaimed Lady Monteagle, advancing. "Have I not to bear a smiling face with a breaking heart!"

"By Jove! a scene," exclaimed Cadurcis in a piteous tone.

"A scene!" exclaimed Lady Monteagle, bursting into a flood of indignant tears. "Is this the way the expression of my feelings is ever to be stigmatised! Barbarous man!"

Cadurcis stood with his back to the fire-place, with his lips compressed, and his hands under his coat-tails. He was resolved that nothing should induce him to utter a word. He looked the picture of dogged indifference.

"I know where you have been," continued Lady Monteagle. "You have been to Richmond; you have been with Miss Herbert. Yes! I know all. I am a victim, but I will not be a dupe. Yorkshire indeed! Paltry coward!"

Cadurcis hummed an air.

"And this is Lord Cadurcis!" continued the lady. "The sublime, ethereal Lord Cadurcis, condescending to the last refuge of the meanest, most commonplace mind, a vulgar, wretched lie!"

What could have been expected from such a mind? You may delude the world, but I know you. Yes! Sir; I know you. And I will let everybody know you. I will tear away the veil of charlatanism with which you have enveloped yourself. The world shall at length discover the nature of the idol they have worshipped. All your meanness, all your falsehood, all your selfishness, all your baseness, shall be revealed. I may be spurned, but at any rate I will be revenged!"

Lord Cadurcis yawned.

"Insulting, pitiful wretch!" continued the lady. "And you think that I wish to hear you speak! You think the sound of that deceitful voice has any charm for me! You are mistaken, Sir. I have listened to you too long. It was not to remonstrate with you that I resolved to see you. The tones of your voice can only excite my disgust. I am here to speak myself; to express to you the contempt, the detestation, the aversion, the scorn, the hatred, which I entertain for you!"

Lord Cadurcis whistled.

The lady paused; she had effected the professed purport of her visit; she ought now to have retired, and Cadurcis would most willingly have opened the door for her, and bowed her out of his apartment. But her conduct did not exactly accord with her speech. She intimated no intention of moving. Her courteous friend retained his position, and adhered to his policy of silence. There was a dead pause, and then Lady Monteagle, throwing herself into a chair, went into hysterics.

Lord Cadurcis, following her example, also seated himself, took up a book, and began to read.

The hysterics became fainter and fainter; they experienced all those gradations of convulsive noise with which Lord Cadurcis was so well acquainted; at length they subsided into sobs and sighs. Finally, there was again silence, now only disturbed by the sound of a page turned by Lord Cadurcis.

Suddenly the lady sprang from her seat, and firmly grasping the arm of Cadurcis, threw herself on her knees at his side.

"Cadurcis!" she exclaimed, in a tender tone, "do you love me?"

"My dear Gertrude," said Lord Cadurcis coolly, but rather regretting he had quitted his original and less assailable posture, "you know I like quiet women."

"Cadurcis, forgive me!" murmured the lady. "Pity me! Think only how miserable I am!"

"Your misery is of your own making," said Lord Cadurcis. "What occasion is there for any of these extraordinary proceedings? I have told you a thousand times that I cannot endure

scenes. Female society is a relaxation to me; you convert it into torture. I like to sail upon a summer sea; and you always will insist upon a white squall."

"But you have deserted me!"

"I never desert any one," replied Cadurcis very calmly, raising her from her supplicating attitude, and leading her to a seat. "The last time we met, you banished me your presence, and told me never to speak to you again. Well, I obeyed your orders, as I always do."

"But I did not mean what I said," said Lady Monteagle.

"How should I know that?" said Lord Cadurcis.

"Your heart ought to have assured you," said the lady.

"The tongue is a less deceptive organ than the heart," replied her companion.

"Cadurcis," said the lady, looking at her strange disguise, "what do you advise me to do?"

"To go home; and if you like I will order my vis-a-vis for you directly," and he rose from his seat to give the order.

"Ah! you are sighing to get rid of me!" said the lady, in a reproachful, but still very subdued tone.

"Why, the fact is, Gertrude, I prefer calling upon you, to your calling upon me. When I am fitted for your society, I seek it: and, when you are good-tempered, always with pleasure; when I am not in the mood for it, I stay away. And when I am at home, I wish to see no one;—I have business now, and not very agreeable business. I am disturbed by many causes, and you could not have taken a step which could have given me greater annoyance than the strange one you have adopted this evening."

"I am sorry for it now," said the lady, weeping. "When shall I see you again?"

"I will call upon you to-morrow, and pray receive me with smiles."

"I ever will," said the lady, weeping plenteously. "It is all my fault; you are ever too good. There is not in the world a kinder and more gentle being than yourself. I shall never forgive myself for this exposure."

"Would you like to take anything?" said Lord Cadurcis: "I am sure you must feel exhausted. You see I am drinking wine; it is my only dinner to-day, but I dare say there is some sal-volatile in the house; I dare say, when my maids go into hysterics, they have it!"

"Ah! mocker," said Lady Monteagle, "but I can pardon everything, if you will only let me see you."

"Au revoir! then," said his lordship; "I am sure the carriage

must be ready. I hear it. Come Mr. Gertrude, settle your wig,—it is quite awry. By Jove! we might as well go to the Pantheon, as you are ready dressed. I have a domino.” And so saying, Lord Cadurcis handed the lady to his carriage, and pressed her lightly by the hand, as he reiterated his promise of calling at Monteagle House the next day.

CHAPTER XVII.

LORD CADURCIS—unhappy at home, and wearied of the commonplace resources of society—had passed the night in every species of dissipation; his principal companion being that same young nobleman in whose company he had been when he first met Venetia at Ranelagh. The morn was nearly breaking when Cadurcis and his friend arrived at his door. They had settled to welcome the dawn with a beaker of burnt Burgundy.

“Nôw, my dear Scrope,” said Cadurcis, “now for quiet and philosophy. The laughter of those infernal women, the rattle of those cursed dice, and the oaths of those ruffians, are still ringing in my ears. Let us compose ourselves, and moralise.”

Accustomed to their master’s habits—who generally turned night into day—the household were all on the alert; a blazing fire greeted them, and his lordship ordered instantly a devil and the burnt Burgundy.

“Sit you down here, my Scrope; that is the seat of honour, and you shall have it. What is this—a letter? and marked ‘Urgent’—and in a man’s hand? It must be read. Some good fellow nabbed by a bailiff, or planted by his mistress. Signals of distress! We must assist our friends.”

The flame of the fire fell upon Lord Cadurcis’ face as he read the letter; he was still standing, while his friend was stretched out in his easy chair, and inwardly congratulating himself on his comfortable prospects. The countenance of Cadurcis did not change, but he bit his lip, and read the letter twice, and turned it over, but with a careless air; and then he asked what o’clock it was. The servant informed him, and left the room.

“Scrope,” said Lord Cadurcis, very quietly, and still standing, “are you very drunk?”

“My dear fellow, I am as fresh as possible; you will see what justice I shall do to the Burgundy.”

“‘Burgundy to-morrow,’ as the Greek proverb saith,” observed Lord Cadurcis. “Read that.”

His companion had the pleasure of perusing a challenge from

Lord Monteagle, couched in no gentle terms, and requesting an immediate meeting.

"Well, I never heard anything more ridiculous in my life," said Lord Scrope. "Does he want satisfaction because you have planted her?"

"D—n her!" said Lord Cadurcis. "She has occasioned me a thousand annoyances, and now she has spoilt our supper. I don't know, though; he wants to fight quickly,—let us fight at once. I will send him a cartel now, and then we can have our Burgundy. You will go out with me, of course? Hyde Park, six o'clock, and short swords."

Lord Cadurcis accordingly sat down, wrote his letter, and dispatched it by Mr. Spalding to Monteagle House, with peremptory instructions to bring back an answer. The companions then turned to their devil.

"This is a bore, Cadurcis," said Lord Scrope.

"It is. I cannot say I am very valorous in a bad cause. I do not like to fight 'upon compulsion,' I confess. If I had time to screw my courage up, I dare say I should do it very well. I dare say, for instance, if ever I am publicly executed, I shall die game."

"God forbid!" said Lord Scrope. "I say, Cadurcis, I would not drink any Burgundy if I were you. I shall take a glass of cold water."

"Ah! you are only a second, and so you want to cool your valour," said Cadurcis. "You have all the fun."

"But how came this blow-up?" inquired Lord Scrope. "Letters discovered—ch? Because I thought you never saw her now?"

"By Jove! my dear fellow, she has been the whole evening here masquerading it like a very vixen, as she is; and now she has committed us both. I have burnt her letters, without reading them, for the last month. Now I call that honourable; because, as I had no longer any claim on her heart, I would not think of trenching on her correspondence. But honour, what is honour in these dishonourable days? This is my reward. She contrived to enter my house this evening, dressed like a farmer's boy, and you may imagine what ensued; rage, hysterics, and repentance. I am sure if Monteagle had seen me, he would not have been jealous. I never opened my mouth, but, like a fool, sent her home in my carriage; and now I am going to be run through the body for my politeness."

In this light strain,—blended, however, with more decorous feeling on the part of Lord Scrope,—the young men conversed until the messenger's return, with Lord Monteagle's answer. In Hyde Park, in the course of an hour, himself and Lord Cadurcis, attended by their friends, were to meet.

"Well, there is nothing like having these affairs over," said

Cadureis; "and, to confess the truth, my dear Scrope, I should not much care if Monteagle were to despatch me to my fathers: for, in the whole course of my miserable life,—and miserable, whatever the world may think, it has been,—I never felt much more wretched than I have during the last four-and-twenty hours. By Jove! do you know I was going to leave England this morning, and I have ordered my horses, too."

"Leave England!"

"Yes, leave England; and where I never intended to return."

"Well, you are the oddest person I ever knew, Cadureis. I should have thought you the happiest person that ever existed. Everybody admires, everybody envies you. You seem to have everything that man can desire. Your life is a perpetual triumph."

"Ah! my dear Scrope, there is a skeleton in every house. If you knew all, you would not envy me."

"Well, we have not much time," said Lord Scrope, "have you any arrangements to make?"

"None. My property goes to George, who is my only relative, without the necessity of a will, otherwise I should leave everything to him, for he is a good fellow, and my blood is in his veins. Just you remember, Scrope, that I will be buried with my mother. That is all; and now let us get ready."

The sun had just risen when the young men went forth, and the day promised to be as brilliant as the preceding one. Not a soul was stirring in the courtly quarter in which Cadureis resided; even the last watchman had stolen to repose. They called a hackney coach at the first stand they reached, and were soon at the destined spot. They were indeed before their time, and strolling by the side of the Serpentine, Cadureis said, "Yesterday morning was one of the happiest of my life, Scrope, and I was in hopes that an event would have occurred in the course of the day, that might have been my salvation. If it had, by-the-bye, I should not have returned to town, and got into this cursed scrape. However, the gods were against me, and now I am reckless."

Now Lord Monteagle and his friend, who was Mr. Horace Pole, appeared. Cadureis advanced, and bowed; Lord Monteagle returned his bow, stiffly, but did not speak. The seconds chose their ground, the champions disembarrassed themselves of their coats, and their swords crossed. It was a brief affair. After a few passes, Cadureis received a slight wound in his arm, while his weapon pierced his antagonist in the breast. Lord Monteagle dropped his sword, and fell.

"You had better fly, Lord Cadureis," said Mr. Horace Pole. "This is a bad business, I fear; we have a surgeon at hand, and he can help us to the coach that is waiting close by."

"I thank you, Sir, I never fly," said Lord Cadurcis; "and I shall wait here until I see your principal safely deposited in his carriage; he will have no objection to my friend, Lord Scrope, assisting him, who, by his presence to-day, has only fulfilled one of the painful duties that society imposes upon us."

The surgeon gave a very unfavourable report of the wound, which he dressed on the field. Lord Monteagle was then borne to his carriage, which was at hand, and Lord Scrope, the moment he had seen the equipage move slowly off, returned to his friend.

"Well, Cadurcis," he exclaimed, in an anxious voice, "I hope you have not killed him. What will you do now?"

"I shall go home, and await the result, my dear Scrope. I am sorry for you, for this may get you into trouble. For myself, I care nothing."

"You bleed!" said Lord Scrope.

"A scratch. I almost wish our lots had been the reverse. Come, Scrope, help me on with my coat. Yesterday I lost my heart, last night I lost my money, and perhaps to-morrow I shall lose my arm. It seems we are not in luck."

CHAPTER XVIII.

It has been well observed, that no spectacle is so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality. In general, elopements, divorces, and family quarrels, pass with little notice. We read the scandal, talk about it for a day, and forget it. But once in six or seven years, our virtue becomes outrageous. We cannot suffer the laws of religion and decency to be violated. We must make a stand against vice. We must teach libertines that the English people appreciate the importance of domestic ties. Accordingly, some unfortunate man, in no respect more depraved than hundreds whose offences have been treated with lenity, is singled out as an expiatory sacrifice. If he has children, they are to be taken from him. If he has a profession, he is to be driven from it. He is cut by the higher orders, and hissed by the lower. He is, in truth, a sort of whipping boy, by whose vicarious agonies all the other transgressors of the same class are, it is supposed, sufficiently chastised. We reflect very complacently on our own severity, and compare, with great pride, the high standard of morals established in England, with the Parisian laxity. At length, our anger is satiated,—our victim is ruined, and heart-broken,—and our virtue goes quietly to sleep for seven years more.

These observations of a celebrated writer, apply to the instance

of Lord Cadureis; he was the periodical victim, the scapegoat of English morality, sent into the wilderness with all the crimes and curses of the multitude on his head. Lord Cadureis had certainly committed a great crime: not his intrigue with Lady Monteagle, for that surely was not an unprecedented offence; not his duel with her husband, for after all it was a duel in self-defence: and, at all events, divorces and duels, under any circumstances, would scarcely have excited or authorised the storm which was now about to burst over the late spoiled child of society. But Lord Cadureis had been guilty of the offence which, of all offences, is punished most severely:—Lord Cadureis had been overpraised. He had excited too warm an interest; and the public, with its usual justice, was resolved to chastise him for its own folly.

There are no fits of caprice so hasty and so violent as those of society. Society, indeed, is all passions and no heart. Cadureis, in allusion to his sudden and singular success, had been in the habit of saying to his intimates, that he “woke one morning and found himself famous.” He might now observe, “I woke one morning and found myself infamous.” Before twenty-four hours had passed over his duel with Lord Monteagle, he found himself branded by every journal in London, as an unprincipled and unparalleled reprobate. The public, without waiting to think or even to inquire after the truth, instantly selected as genuine the most false and the most flagrant of the fifty libellous narratives that were circulated of the transaction. Stories, inconsistent with themselves, were all alike eagerly believed, and what evidence there might be for any one of them, the virtuous people, by whom they were repeated, neither cared nor knew. The public, in short, fell into a passion with their darling, and, ashamed of their past idolatry, nothing would satisfy them but knocking the divinity on the head.

Until Lord Monteagle, to the great regret of society, who really wished him to die in order that his antagonist might commit murder, was declared out of danger, Lord Cadureis never quitted his house, and he was not a little surprised that scarcely a human being called upon him except his cousin, who immediately flew to his succour. George, indeed, would gladly have spared Cadureis any knowledge of the storm that was raging against him, and which he flattered himself would blow over before Cadureis was again abroad; but he was so much with his cousin, and Cadureis was so extremely acute and naturally so suspicious, that this was impossible. Moreover, his absolute desertion by his friends, and the invectives and the lampoons with which the newspapers abounded, and of which he was the subject, rendered any concealment out of the question, and poor George passed his life in running about contradicting falsehoods, stating truth, fighting his cousin's battles, and

then reporting to him, in the course of the day, the state of the campaign.

Cadureis, being a man of infinite sensibility, suffered tortures. He had been so habituated to panegyric, that the slightest criticism ruffled him, and now his works had suddenly become the subject of universal and outrageous attack; having lived only in a cloud of incense, he suddenly found himself in a pillory of moral indignation; his writings, his habits, his temper, his person, were all alike ridiculed and vilified. In a word, Cadureis, the petted, idolized, spoiled Cadureis, was enduring that charming vicissitude in a prosperous existence, styled a reaction; and a conqueror, who deemed himself invincible, suddenly vanquished, could scarcely be more thunderstruck or feel more impotently desperate.

The tortures of his mind, however, which this sudden change in his position and in the opinions of society, were of themselves competent to occasion to one of so impetuous and irritable a temperament, and who ever magnified both misery and delight with all the creative power of a brooding imagination, were excited in his case even to the liveliest agony, when he reminded himself of the situation in which he was now placed with Venetia. All hope of ever obtaining her hand had now certainly vanished, and he doubted whether even her love could survive the quick occurrence, after his ardent vows, of this degrading and mortifying catastrophe. He execrated Lady Monteagle with the most heart-felt rage, and when he remembered that all this time the world believed him the devoted admirer of this vixen, his brain was stimulated almost to the verge of insanity. His only hope of the truth reaching Venetia was through the medium of his cousin, and he impressed daily upon Captain Cadureis the infinite consolation it would prove to him, if he could contrive to make her aware of the real facts of the case. According to the public voice, Lady Monteagle at his solicitation had fled to his house, and remained there, and her husband forced his entrance into the mansion in the middle of the night, while his wife escaped disguised in Lord Cadureis' clothes. She did not, however, reach Monteagle House in time enough to escape detection by her lord, who had instantly sought and obtained satisfaction from his treacherous friend. All the monstrous inventions of the first week had now subsided into this circumstantial and undoubted narrative; at least this was the version believed by those who had been Cadureis' friends. They circulated the authentic tale with the most considerate assiduity, and shook their heads, and said it was too bad, and that he must not be countenanced.

The moment Lord Monteagle was declared out of danger, Lord Cadureis made his appearance in public. He walked into Brookes', and everybody seemed suddenly so deeply interested in the news-

paper, that you might have supposed they had brought intelligence of a great battle, or a revolution, or a change of ministry at the least. One or two men spoke to him, who had never presumed to address him at any other time, and he received a faint bow from a very distinguished nobleman, who had ever professed for him the greatest consideration and esteem.

Cadureis mounted his horse and rode down to the House of Lords. There was a debate of some public interest, and a considerable crowd was collected round the Peers' entrance. The moment Lord Cadureis was recognised, the multitude began hooting. He was agitated, and grinned a ghastly smile at the rabble. But he dismounted, without further annoyance, and took his seat. Not a single peer of his own party spoke to him. The leader of the opposition, indeed, bowed to him, and, in the course of the evening, he received, from one or two more of his party, some formal evidences of frigid courtesy. The tone of his reception by his friends could not be concealed from the ministerial party. It was soon detected, and generally whispered, that Lord Cadureis was cut. Nevertheless, he sat out the debate and voted. The house broke up. He felt lonely; his old friend, the Bishop of —, who had observed all that had occurred, and who might easily have avoided him, came forward, however, in the most marked manner, and, in a tone which everybody heard, said, "How do you do, Lord Cadureis? I am very glad to see you," shaking his hand most cordially. This made a great impression. Several of the Tory Lords, among them Venetia's uncle, now advanced and saluted him. He received their advances with a haughty, but not disdainful, courtesy; but when his Whig friends, very confused, now hurried to encumber him with their assistance, he treated them with the scorn which they well deserved.

"Will you take a seat in my carriage home, Lord Cadureis?" said his leader, for it was notorious that Cadureis had been mobbed on his arrival.

"Thank you, my Lord," said Cadureis, speaking very audibly, "I prefer returning as I came. We are really both of us such very unpopular personages, that your kindness would scarcely be prudent."

The house had been very full; there was a great scuffle and confusion as the peers were departing; the mob, now very considerable, were prepared for the appearance of Lord Cadureis, and their demeanour was menacing. Some shouted out his name; then it was repeated with odious and vindictive epithets, followed by ferocious yells. A great many peers collected round Cadureis, and entreated him not to return on horseback. It must be confessed that very genuine and considerable feeling was now shown by all men of all

parties. And indeed to witness this young, and noble, and gifted creature, but a few days back the idol of the nation, and from whom a word, a glance even, was deemed the greatest and most gratifying distinction—whom all orders, classes, and conditions of men had combined to stimulate with multiplied adulation,—with all the glory and ravishing delights of the world, as it were, forced upon him,—to see him thus assailed with the savage execrations of all those vile things who exult in the fall of everything that is great, and the abasement of everything that is noble, was indeed a spectacle which might have silenced malice and satisfied envy !

“My carriage is most heartily at your service, Lord Cadurcis,” said the noble leader of the government in the upper house ; “you can enter it without the slightest suspicion by these ruffians.”—“Lord Cadurcis ; my dear Lord ; my good Lord—for our sakes, if not for your own—Cadurcis, dear Cadurcis, my good Cadurcis, it is madness, folly, insanity,—a mob will do anything, and an English mob is viler than all—for Heaven’s sake !” Such were a few of the varied exclamations which resounded on all sides, but which produced on the person to whom they were addressed only the result of his desiring the attendant to call for his horses.

The lobby was yet full ; it was a fine thing in the light of the archway to see Cadurcis spring into his saddle. Instantly there was a horrible yell. Yet in spite of all their menaces, the mob were for a time awed by his courage ; they made way for him ; he might even have rode quickly on for some few yards, but he would not ; he reined his fiery steed into a slow but stately pace, and, with a countenance scornful and composed, he continued his progress, apparently unconscious of impediment. Meanwhile, the hooting continued without abatement, increasing indeed, after the first comparative pause, in violence and menace. At length a bolder ruffian, excited by the uproar, rushed forward and seized Cadurcis’ bridle. Cadurcis struck the man over the eyes with his whip, and at the same time touched his horse with his spur, and the assailant was dashed to the ground. This seemed a signal for a general assault. It commenced with hideous yells. His friends at the house, who had watched everything with the keenest interest, immediately directed all the constables who were at hand to rush to his succour ; hitherto they had restrained the police, lest their interference might stimulate rather than repress the mob. The charge of the constables was well timed ; they laid about them with their staves ; you might have heard the echo of many a broken crown. Nevertheless, though they dispersed the mass, they could not penetrate the immediate barrier that surrounded Lord Cadurcis, whose only defence indeed, for they had cut off his groom, was the terrors of his horse’s heels, and whose managed motions he regulated with admirable skill—now

rearing, now prancing, now kicking behind, and now turning round with a quick yet sweeping motion, before which the mob retreated. Off his horse, however, they seemed resolved to drag him; and it was not difficult to conceive, if they succeeded, what must be his eventual fate. They were infuriate, but his contact with his assailants fortunately prevented their co-mates from hurling stones at him from the fear of endangering their own friends.

A messenger to the Horse Guards had been sent from the House of Lords; but, before the military could arrive, and fortunately—for, with their utmost expedition, they must have been too late—a rumour of the attack got current in the House of Commons. Captain Cadurcis, Lord Scrope, and a few other young men instantly rushed out; and, ascertaining the truth, armed with good cudgels and such other effective weapons as they could instantly obtain, they mounted their horses and charged the nearly-triumphant populace, dealing such vigorous blows that their efforts soon made a visible diversion in Lord Cadurcis' favour. It is very difficult, indeed, to convey an idea of the exertions and achievements of Captain Cadurcis; no Paladin of chivalry ever executed such marvels in a swarm of Paynim slaves; and many a bloody coxcomb and broken limb bore witness in Petty France that night to his achievements. Still the mob struggled and were not daunted by the delay in immolating their victim. As long as they had only to fight against men in plain clothes, they were valorous and obstinate enough; but the moment that the crests of a troop of Horse Guards were seen trotting down Parliament-street, everybody ran away, and in a few minutes all Palace-yard was as still as if the genius of the place rendered a riot impossible.

Lord Cadurcis thanked his friends, who were profuse in their compliments to his pluck. His manner, usually playful with his intimates of his own standing, was, however, rather grave at present, though very cordial. He asked them home to dine with him; but they were obliged to decline his invitation, as a division was expected; so, saying "Good-bye, George, perhaps I shall see you to-night," Cadurcis rode rapidly off.

With Cadurcis there was but one step from the most exquisite sensitiveness to the most violent defiance. The experience of this day had entirely cured him of his previous nervous deference to the feelings of society. Society had outraged him, and now he resolved to outrage society. He owed society nothing; his reception at the House of Lords and the riot in Palace-yard had alike cleared his accounts with all orders of men, from the highest to the lowest. He had experienced, indeed, some kindness that he could not forget, but only from his own kin, and those who with his associations were the same as kin. His memory dwelt with gratification on his

cousin's courageous zeal, and still more on the demonstration which Masham had made in his favour, which, if possible, argued still greater boldness and sincere regard. That was a trial of true affection, and an instance of moral courage, which Cadurcis honoured, and which he never could forget. He was anxious about Venetia; he wished to stand as well with her as he deserved; no better; but he was grieved to think she could believe all those infamous tales at present current respecting himself. But for the rest of the world, he delivered them all to the most absolute contempt, disgust, and execration; he resolved, from this time, nothing should ever induce him again to enter society, or admit the advances of a single civilized ruffian who affected to be social. The country, the people, their habits, laws, manners, customs, opinions, and everything connected with them, were viewed with the same jaundiced eye; and his only object now was to quit England, to which he resolved never to return.

CHAPTER XIX.

VENETIA was, perhaps, not quite so surprised as the rest of her friends, when, on their return to Richmond, Lord Cadurcis was not again seen. She was very unhappy: she recalled the scene in the garden at Cherbury some years back; and, with the knowledge of the impetuosity of his temper, she believed she should never see him again. Poor Plantagenet, who loved her so much, and whose love she so fully returned! why might they not be happy? She neither doubted the constancy of his affection, nor their permanent felicity if they were united. She shared none of her mother's apprehensions or her prejudices, but she was the victim of duty and her vow. In the course of four-and-twenty hours, strange rumours were afloat respecting Lord Cadurcis; and the newspapers on the ensuing morning told the truth, and more than the truth. Venetia could not doubt as to the duel or the elopement; but, instead of feeling indignation, she attributed what had occurred to the desperation of his mortified mind; and she visited on herself all the fatal consequences that had happened. At present, however, all her emotions were quickly absorbed in the one terrible fear that Lord Monteagle would die. In that dreadful and urgent apprehension every other sentiment merged. It was impossible to conceal her misery, and she entreated her mother to return to town.

Very differently, however, was the catastrophe viewed by Lady Annabel. She, on the contrary, triumphed in her sagacity and

her prudence. She hourly congratulated herself on being the saviour of her daughter; and though she refrained from indulging in any open exultation over Venetia's escape and her own profound discretion, it was, nevertheless, impossible for her to conceal from her daughter her infinite satisfaction and self-congratulation. While Venetia was half broken-hearted, her mother silently returned thanks to Providence for the merciful dispensation which had exempted her child from so much misery.

The day after their return to town, Captain Cadurcis called upon them. Lady Annabel never mentioned the name of his cousin; but George, finding no opportunity of conversing with Venetia alone, and being, indeed, too much excited to speak on any other subject, plunged at once into the full narrative; defended Lord Cadurcis, abused the Montegles and the slanderous world, and, in spite of Lady Annabel's ill-concealed dissatisfaction, favoured her with an exact and circumstantial account of everything that had happened—how it happened, when it happened, and where it happened; concluding by a declaration that Cadurcis was the best fellow that ever lived; the most unfortunate, and the most ill-used; and that, if he were to be hunted down for an affair like this, over which he had no control, there was not a man in London who could be safe for ten minutes. All that George effected by his zeal, was to convince Lady Annabel that his cousin had entirely corrupted him; she looked upon her former favourite as another victim; but Venetia listened in silence, and not without solace.

Two or three days after the riot at the House of Lords, Captain Cadurcis burst into his cousin's room with a triumphant countenance. "Well, Plantagenet!" he exclaimed, "I have done it: I have seen her alone, and I have put you as right as possible. Nothing can be better."

"Tell me, my dear fellow," said Lord Cadurcis, eagerly.

"Well, you know, I have called half-a-dozen times," said George, "but either Lady Annabel was there, or they were not at home, or something always occurred to prevent any private communication. But I met her to-day with her aunt; I joined them immediately, and kept with them the whole morning. I am sorry to say she, I mean Venetia, is devilish ill; she is, indeed. However, her aunt now is quite on your side, and very kind, I can tell you that. I put her right at first, and she has fought our battle bravely. Well, they stopped to call somewhere, and Venetia was so unwell that she would not get out, and I was left alone in the carriage with her. Time was precious, and I opened at once. I told her how wretched you were, and that the only thing that made you miserable was about her, because you were afraid she would think you so profligate, and all that. I went through it all;

told her the exact truth, which, indeed, she had before heard; but now I assured her, on my honour, that it was exactly what happened; and she said she did not doubt it, and could not, from some conversation which you had together the day we were all at Hampton Court, and that she felt that nothing could have been premeditated, and fully believed that everything had occurred as I said; and, however she deplored it, she felt the same for you as ever, and prayed for your happiness. Then she told me what misery the danger of Lord Monteagle had occasioned her; that she thought his death must have been the forerunner of her own; but the moment he was declared out of danger seemed the happiest hour of her life. I told her you were going to leave England, and asked her whether she had any message for you; and she said, 'Tell him he is the same to me that he has always been.' So, when her aunt returned, I jumped out and ran on to you at once."

"You are the best fellow that ever lived, George," said Lord Cadurcis; "and now the world may go to the devil!"

This message from Venetia acted upon Lord Cadurcis like a charm. It instantly cleared his mind. He shut himself up in his house for a week, and wrote a farewell to England, perhaps the most masterly effusion of his powerful spirit. It abounded in passages of overwhelming passion, and almost Satanic sarcasm. Its composition entirely relieved his long-brooding brain. It contained, moreover, a veiled address to Venetia,—delicate, tender, and irresistibly affecting. He appended also to the publication, the verses he had previously addressed to her.

This volume, which was purchased with an avidity exceeding even the eagerness with which his former productions had been received, exercised the most extraordinary influence on public opinion. It enlisted the feelings of the nation on his side in a struggle with a coterie. It was suddenly discovered that Lord Cadurcis was the most injured of mortals, and far more interesting than ever. The address to the unknown object of his adoration, and the verses to Venetia, mystified everybody. Lady Monteagle was universally abused, and all sympathised with the long-treasured and baffled affection of the unhappy poet. Cadurcis, however, was not to be conciliated. He left his native shores in a blaze of glory, but with the accents of scorn still quivering on his lip.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

THE still waters of the broad and winding lake reflected the lustre of the cloudless sky. The gentle declinations of the green hills that immediately bordered the lake, with an undulating margin that now retired into bays of the most picturesque form, now jutted forth into woody promontories, and then opened into valleys of sequestered beauty, which the eye delighted to pursue, were studded with white villas, and cottages scarcely less graceful, and occasionally with villages, and even towns; here and there rose a solitary chapel; and, scarcely less conspicuous, the black spire of some cypress strikingly contrasting with the fair buildings or the radiant foliage that in general surrounded them. A rampart of azure mountains raised their huge forms behind the nearer hills; and occasionally peering over these, like spectres on some brilliant festival, were the ghastly visages of the Alpine glaciers.

It was within an hour of sunset, and the long shadows had fallen upon the waters; a broad boat, with a variegated awning, rowed by two men, approached the steps of a marble terrace. The moment they had reached their point of destination, and had fastened the boat to its moorings, the men landed their oars, and immediately commenced singing a simple yet touching melody, wherewith it was their custom to apprise their employers of their arrival.

"Will they come forth this evening, think you, Vittorio?" said one boatman to the other.

"By our holy mother! I hope so," replied his comrade, "for this light air that is now rising will do the young Signora more good than fifty doctors."

"They are good people," said Vittorio. "It gives me more pleasure to row them than any persons who ever hired us."

"Ay, ay!" said his comrade, "it was a lucky day when we first put an oar in the lake for them, heretics though they be."

"But they may be converted yet," said his companion; "for, as I was saying to Father Francisco last night, if the young Signora dies, it is a sad thing to think what will become of her."

"And what said the good Father?"

"He shook his head," said Vittorio.

"When Father Francisco shakes his head, he means a great deal," said his companion.

At this moment a servant appeared on the terrace, to say the

ladies were at hand ; and very shortly afterwards Lady Annabel Herbert, with her daughter leaning on her arm, descended the steps, and entered the boat. The countenances of the boatmen brightened when they saw them, and they both made their inquiries after the health of Venetia with tenderness and feeling.

"Indeed, my good friends," said Venetia, "I think you are right, and the lake will cure me after all."

"The blessing of the lake be upon you, Signora," said the boatmen, crossing themselves.

Just as they were moving off, came running Mistress Pauncefort, quite breathless. "Miss Herbert's fur cloak, my lady; you told me to remember, my lady, and I cannot think how I forgot it. But I really have been so very hot all day, that such a thing as furs never entered my head. And for my part, until I travelled, I always thought furs were only worn in Russia. But live and learn, as I say."

They were now fairly floating on the calm, clear waters, and the rising breeze was as grateful to Venetia as the boatmen had imagined.

A return of those symptoms which had before so disquieted Lady Annabel for her daughter, and which were formerly the cause of their residence at Weymouth, had induced her, in compliance with the advice of her physicians, to visit Italy; but the fatigue of travel had exhausted the energies of Venetia—for in those days the Alps were not passed in luxurious travelling carriages—on the very threshold of the promised land; and Lady Annabel had been prevailed upon to take a villa on the Lago Maggiore, where Venetia had passed two months, still suffering indeed from great debility, but not without advantage.

There are few spots more favoured by nature than the Italian lakes and their vicinity, combining, as they do, the most sublime features of mountainous scenery with all the softer beauties and the varied luxuriance of the plain. As the still, bright lake is to the rushing and troubled cataract, is Italy to Switzerland and Savoy. Emerging from the chaotic ravines and the wild gorges of the Alps, the happy land breaks upon us like a beautiful vision. We revel in the sunny light, after the unearthly glare of eternal snow. Our sight seems renovated as we throw our eager glance over those golden plains, clothed with such picturesque trees, sparkling with such graceful villages, watered by such noble rivers, and crowned with such magnificent cities; and all bathed and beaming in an atmosphere so soft and radiant! Every isolated object charms us with its beautiful novelty: for the first time we gaze on palaces; the garden, the terrace, and the statue, recall our dreams beneath a colder sky; and we turn from these to catch the hallowed form of some cupola'd convent, crowning the gentle

elevation of some green hill, and flanked by the cypress or the pine.

The influence of all these delightful objects and of this benign atmosphere on the frame and mind of Venetia had been considerable. After the excitement of the last year of her life, and the harassing and agitating scenes with which it closed, she found a fine solace in this fair land and this soft sky, which the sad perhaps can alone experience. Its repose alone afforded a consolatory contrast to the turbulent pleasure of the great world. She looked back upon those glittering and noisy scenes with an aversion which was only modified by her self-congratulation at her escape from their exhausting and contaminating sphere. Here she recurred, but with all the advantages of a change of scene, and a scene so rich in novel and interesting associations, to the calm tenor of those days, when not a thought ever seemed to escape from Cherbury and its spell-bound seclusion. Her books, her drawings, her easel, and her harp, were now again her chief pursuits; pursuits, however, influenced by the genius of the land in which she lived, and therefore invested with a novel interest; for the literature and the history of the country naturally attracted her attention; and its fair aspects and sweet sounds, alike inspired her pencil and her voice. She had, in the society of her mother, indeed, the advantage of communing with a mind not less refined and cultivated than her own. Lady Annabel was a companion whose conversation, from reading and reflection, was eminently suggestive; and their hours, though they lived in solitude, never hung heavy. They were always employed, and always cheerful. But Venetia was not more than cheerful. Still very young, and gifted with an imaginative and therefore sanguine mind, the course of circumstances, however, had checked her native spirit, and shaded a brow which, at her time of life and with her temperament, should have been rather fanciful than pensive. If Venetia, supported by the disciplined energies of a strong mind, had schooled herself into not looking back to the past with grief, her future was certainly not tinged with the Iris pencil of Hope. It seemed to her that it was her fate that life should bring her no happier hours than those she now enjoyed. They did not amount to exquisite bliss. That was a conviction which, by no process of reflection, however ingenious, could she delude herself to credit. Venetia struggled to take refuge in content, a mood of mind perhaps less natural than it should be to one so young, so gifted, and so fair!

Their villa was surrounded by a garden in the ornate and artificial style of the country. A marble terrace overlooked the lake, crowned with many a statue and vase that held the aloe. The laurel and the cactus, the cypress and the pine, filled the air with

their fragrance, or charmed the eye with their rarity and beauty: the walks were festooned with the vine, and they could raise their hands and pluck the glowing fruit which screened them from the beam by which it was ripened. In this enchanted domain Venetia might be often seen—a form even fairer than the sculptured nymphs among which she glided—catching the gentle breeze that played upon the surface of the lake, or watching the white sail that glittered in the sun as it floated over its purple bosom.

Yet this beautiful retreat Venetia was soon to quit, and she thought of her departure with a sigh. Her mother had been warned to avoid the neighbourhood of the mountains in the winter, and the autumn was approaching its close. If Venetia could endure the passage of the Apennines, it was the intention of Lady Annabel to pass the winter on the coast of the Mediterranean; otherwise to settle in one of the Lombard cities. At all events, in the course of a few weeks they were to quit their villa on the lake.

CHAPTER II.

A VERY few days after this excursion on the lake, Lady Annabel and her daughter were both surprised and pleased with a visit from a friend whose appearance was certainly very unexpected; this was Captain Cadurcis. On his way from Switzerland to Sicily, he had heard of their residence in the neighbourhood, and had crossed over from Arona to visit them.

The name of Cadurcis was still dear to Venetia, and George had displayed such gallantry and devotion in all his cousin's troubles, that she was personally attached to him; he had always been a favourite of her mother; his arrival, therefore, was welcomed by each of the ladies with great cordiality. He accepted the hospitality which Lady Annabel offered him, and remained with them a week, a period which they spent in visiting the most beautiful and interesting spots of the lake, with which they were already sufficiently familiar to allow them to prove guides as able as they were agreeable. These excursions, indeed, contributed to the pleasure and happiness of the whole party. There was about Captain Cadurcis a natural cheerfulness which animated every one in his society; a gay simplicity, difficult to define, but very charming, and which, without effort, often produced deeper impressions than more brilliant and subtle qualities. Left alone in the world, and without a single advantage save those that nature had conferred upon him, it had often been remarked, that in whatever circle he moved George Cadurcis always became the favourite and everywhere made friends. His sweet and engaging

temper had perhaps as much contributed to his professional success as his distinguished gallantry and skill. Other officers, no doubt, were as brave and able as Captain Cadurcis, but his commanders always signalled him out for favourable notice: and strange to say, his success, instead of exciting envy and ill-will, pleased even his less fortunate competitors. However hard another might feel his own lot, it was soothed by the reflection that George Cadurcis was at least more fortunate. His popularity, however, was not confined to his profession. His cousin's noble guardian, whom George had never seen until he ventured to call upon his lordship on his return to England, now looked upon him almost as a son, and omitted no opportunity of advancing his interests in the world. Of all the members of the House of Commons he was perhaps the only one that everybody praised, and his success in the world of fashion had been as remarkable as in his profession. These great revolutions in his life and future prospects had, however, not produced the slightest change in his mind and manners; and this was perhaps the secret spell of his prosperity. Though we are most of us the creatures of affectation, simplicity has a great charm, especially when attended, as in the present instance, with many agreeable and some noble qualities. In spite of the rough fortunes of his youth, the breeding of Captain Cadurcis was very high; the recollection of the race to which he belonged had never been forgotten by him. He was proud of his family. He had one of those light hearts, too, which enable their possessors to acquire accomplishments with facility: he had a sweet voice, a quick ear, a rapid eye. He acquired a language, as some men learn an air. Then his temper was imperturbable, and although the most obliging and kindest-hearted creature that ever lived, there was a native dignity about him which prevented his good nature from being abused. No sense of interest either could ever induce him to act contrary to the dictates of his judgment and his heart. At the risk of offending his patron, George sided with his cousin, although he had deeply offended his guardian, and although the whole world was against him. Indeed, the strong affection that Lord Cadurcis instantly entertained for George is not the least remarkable instance of the singular, though silent, influence that Captain Cadurcis everywhere acquired. Lord Cadurcis had fixed upon him for his friend from the first moment of their acquaintance, and though apparently there could not be two characters more dissimilar, there were at bottom some striking points of sympathy and some strong bonds of union, in the generosity and courage that distinguished both, and in the mutual blood that filled their veins.

There seemed to be a tacit understanding between the several members of our party that the name of Lord Cadurcis was not to

be mentioned. Lady Annabel made no inquiry after him ; Venetia was unwilling to hazard a question which would annoy her mother, and of which the answer could not bring her much satisfaction ; and Captain Cadurcis did not think fit himself to originate any conversation on the subject. Nevertheless, Venetia could not help sometimes fancying, when her eyes met his, that their mutual thoughts were the same, and both dwelling on one who was absent, and of whom her companion would willingly have conversed. To confess the truth, indeed, George Cadurcis was on his way to join his cousin, who had crossed over from Spain to Barbary, and journeyed along the African coast from Tangiers to Tripoli. Their point of reunion was to be Sicily or Malta. Hearing of the residence of the Herberts on the lake, he thought it would be but kind to Plantagenet to visit them ; and perhaps to bear to him some message from Venetia. There was nothing, indeed, on which Captain Cadurcis was more intent than to effect the union between his cousin and Miss Herbert. He was deeply impressed with the sincerity of Plantagenet's passion, and he himself entertained for the lady the greatest affection and admiration. He thought she was the only person whom he had ever known, who was really worthy to be his cousin's bride. And, independent of her personal charms and undoubted talents, she had displayed during the outcry against Lord Cadurcis so much good sense, such a fine spirit, and such modest yet sincere affection for the victim, that George Cadurcis had almost lost his own heart to her, when he was endeavouring to induce her not utterly to reject that of another ; and it became one of the dreams of his life, that in a little time, when all, as he fondly anticipated, had ended as it should, and as he wished it, he should be able to find an occasional home at Cadurcis Abbey, and enjoy the charming society of one whom he had already taught himself to consider as a sister.

"And to-night you must indeed go?" said Venetia, as they were walking together on the terrace. It was the only time that they had been alone together during his visit.

"I must start from Arona at daybreak," replied George ; "and I must travel quickly ; for in less than a month I must be in Sicily."

"Sicily! Why are you going to Sicily?"

Captain Cadurcis smiled. "I am going to join a friend of ours," he answered.

"Plantagenet?" she said.

Captain Cadurcis nodded assent.

"Poor Plantagenet!" said Venetia.

"His name has been on my lips several times," said George.

"I am sure of that," said Venetia. "Is he well?"

"He writes to me in fair spirits," said Captain Cadurcis. "He

has been travelling in Spain, and now he is somewhere in Africa ; we are to meet in Sicily or Malta. I think travel has greatly benefited him. He seems quite delighted with his glimpse of Oriental manners ; and I should scarcely be surprised if he were now to stretch on to Constantinople."

"I wonder if he will ever return to England," said Venetia thoughtfully.

"There is only one event that would induce him," said Captain Cadurcis. And then after a pause he added, "You will not ask me what it is?"

"I wish he were in England, and were happy," said Venetia.

"It is in your power to effect both results," said her companion.

"It is useless to recur to that subject," said Venetia. "Plantagenet knows my feelings towards him, but fate has forbidden our destinies to be combined."

"Then he will never return to England, and never be happy. Ah ! Venetia, what shall I tell him when we meet ? What message am I to bear him from you ?"

"Those regards which he ever possessed, and has never forfeited," said Venetia.

"Poor Cadurcis !" said his cousin, shaking his head, "if any man ever had reason to be miserable, it is he."

"We are none of us very happy, I think," said Venetia mournfully. "I am sure when I look back to the last few years of my life it seems to me that there is some curse hanging over our families. I cannot penetrate it ; it baffles me."

"I am sure," said Captain Cadurcis with great animation, "nay, I would pledge my existence cheerfully on the venture, that if Lady Annabel would only relent towards Cadurcis, we should all be the happiest people in the world."

"Heigho !" said Venetia. "There are other cares in our house besides our unfortunate acquaintance with your cousin. We were the last people in the world with whom he should ever have become connected."

"And yet it was an intimacy that commenced auspiciously," said her friend. "I am sure I have sat with Cadurcis, and listened to him by the hour, while he has told me of all the happy days at Cherbury when you were both children ; the only happy days, according to him, that he ever knew."

"Yes ! they were happy days," said Venetia.

"And what connection could have offered a more rational basis for felicity than your union ?" he continued. "Whatever the world may think, I, who know Cadurcis to the very bottom of his heart, feel assured that you never would have repented for an instant becoming the sharer of his life ; your families were of

equal rank, your estates joined, he felt for your mother the affection of a son. There seemed every element that could have contributed to earthly bliss. As for his late career, you who know all have already, have always indeed, viewed it with charity. Placed in his position, who could have acted otherwise? I know very well that his genius, which might recommend him to another woman, is viewed by your mother with more than apprehension. It is true that a man of his exquisite sensibility requires sympathies as refined to command his nature. It is no common mind that could maintain its hold over Cadurcis, and his spirit could not yield but to rare and transcendent qualities. He found them, Venetia, he found them in her whom he had known longest and most intimately, and loved from his boyhood. Talk of constancy, indeed! who has been so constant as my cousin? No, Venetia, you may think fit to bow to the feelings of your mother, and it would be impertinence in me to doubt for an instant the propriety of your conduct: I do not doubt it; I admire it; I admire you, and everything you have done; none can view your behaviour throughout all these painful transactions with more admiration, I might even say with more reverence, than myself; but, Venetia, you never can persuade me, you have never attempted to persuade me, that you yourself are incredulous of the strength and permanency of my cousin's love."

"Ah! George, you are our friend!" said Venetia, a tear stealing down her cheek. "But, indeed, we must not talk of these things. As for myself, I think not of happiness. I am certain I am not born to be happy. I wish only to live calmly; contentedly, I would say; but that, perhaps, is too much. My feelings have been so harrowed, my mind so harassed, during these last few years, and so many causes of pain and misery seem ever hovering round my existence, that I do assure you, my dear friend, I have grown old before my time. Ah! you may smile, George, but my heart is heavy; it is indeed."

"I wish I could lighten it," said Captain Cadurcis. "I fear I am somewhat selfish in wishing you to marry my cousin, for then you know I should have a permanent and authentic claim to your regard. But no one, at least I think so, can feel more deeply interested in your welfare than I do. I never knew any one like you, and I always tell Cadurcis so, and that I think makes him worse, but I cannot help it."

Venetia could not refrain from smiling at the simplicity of this confession.

"Well," continued her companion, "everything, after all, is for the best. You and Plantagenet are both very young; I live in hopes that I shall yet see you Lady Cadurcis."

Venetia shook her head, but was not sorry that their somewhat melancholy conversation should end in a livelier vein. So they entered the villa.

The hour of parting was painful; and the natural gaiety of Captain Cadurcis deserted him. He had become greatly attached to the Herberts. Without any female relatives of his own, their former intimacy and probable connection with his cousin had taught him to look upon them in some degree in the light of kindred. He had originally indeed become acquainted with them in all the blaze of London society, not very calculated to bring out the softer tints and more subdued tones of our character, but even then the dignified grace of Lady Annabel and the radiant beauty of Venetia, had captivated him, and he had cultivated their society with assiduity and extreme pleasure. The grand crisis of his cousin's fortunes had enabled him to become intimate with the more secret and serious qualities of Venetia, and from that moment he had taken the deepest interest in everything connected with her. His happy and unexpected meeting in Italy had completed the spell; and now that he was about to leave them, uncertain even if they should ever meet again, his soft heart trembled, and he could scarcely refrain from tears as he pressed their hands, and bade them his sincere adieus.

The moon had risen ere he entered his boat, and flung a rippling line of glittering light on the bosom of the lake. The sky was without a cloud, save a few thin fleecy vapours that hovered over the azure brow of a distant mountain. The shores of the lake were suffused with the serene effulgence, and every object was so distinct, that the eye was pained by the lights of the villages, that every instant became more numerous and vivid. The bell of a small chapel on the opposite shore, and the distant chant of some fishermen still working at their nets, were the only sounds that broke the silence which they did not disturb. Reclined in his boat, George Cadurcis watched the vanishing villa of the Herberts, until the light in the principal chamber was the only sign that assured him of its site. That chamber held Venetia; the unhappy Venetia! He covered his face with his hand when even the light of her chamber vanished, and, full of thoughts tender and disconsolate, he at length arrived at Arona.

CHAPTER III.

PURSUANT to their plans, the Herberts left the Lago Maggiore towards the end of October, and proceeded by gentle journeys to the Apennines. Before they crossed this barrier, they were to rest awhile in one of the Lombard cities; and now they were on the

point of reaching Arquâ, which Venetia had expressed a strong desire to visit.

At the latter part of the last century, the race of tourists, the offspring of a long peace, and the rapid fortunes made during the war, did not exist. Travelling was then confined to the aristocracy, and though the English, when opportunity offered, have ever been a restless people, the gentle bosoms of the Euganean Hills was then rarely disturbed amid its green and sequestered valleys.

There is not perhaps in all the Italian region, fertile as it is in interesting associations and picturesque beauty, a spot that tradition and nature have so completely combined to hallow, as the last residence of Petrarch. It seems, indeed, to have been formed for the retirement of a pensive and poetic spirit. It recedes from the world by a succession of delicate acclivities clothed with vineyards and orchards, until, winding within these hills, the mountain hamlet is at length discovered, enclosed by two ridges that slope towards each other, and seem to shut out all the passions of a troubled race. The houses are scattered at intervals on the steep sides of these summits, and on a little knoll is the mansion of the poet, built by himself, and commanding a rich and extensive view, that ends only with the shores of the Adriatic sea. His tomb, a sarcophagus of red marble, supported by pillars, doubtless familiar to the reader, is at hand; and placed on an elevated site, gives a solemn impression to a scene, of which the character would otherwise be serenely cheerful.

Our travellers were surprised to find that the house of the poet was inhabited by a very different tenant to the rustic occupier they had anticipated. They heard that a German gentleman had within the last year fixed upon it as the residence of himself and his wife. The peasants were profuse in their panegyrics of this visitor, whose arrival had proved quite an era in the history of their village. According to them, a kinder and more charitable gentleman never breathed; his whole life was spent in studying and contributing to the happiness of those around him. The sick, the sorrowful, and the needy, were ever sure of finding a friend in him, and merit a generous patron. From him came portions to the portionless; a village maiden need despair of being united to her betrothed, while he could assist her; and at his own cost he had sent to the academy of Bologna, a youth whom his father would have made a cowherd, but whom nature predisposed to be a painter. The inhabitants believed this benevolent and generous person was a physician, for he attended the sick, prescribed for their complaints, and had once even performed an operation with great success. It seemed, that since Petrarch no one had ever been so popular at Arquâ as this kind German. Lady Annabel and Venetia were interested with the animated narratives of the ever-active beneficence of this good

man, and Lady Annabel especially regretted that his absence deprived her of the gratification of becoming acquainted with a character so rare and so invaluable. In the meantime, they availed themselves of the offer of his servants to view the house of Petrarch, for their master had left orders, that his absence should never deprive a pilgrim from paying his homage to the shrine of genius.

The house, consisting of two floors, had recently been repaired by the present occupier. It was simply furnished. The ground floor was allotted to the servants. The upper story contained five rooms, three of which were of good size, and two closets. In one of these were the traditionary chair and table of Petrarch, and here, according to their guides, the master of the house passed a great portion of his time in study, to which, by their account, he seemed devoted. The adjoining chamber was his library; its windows opened on a balcony looking on two lofty and conical hills, one topped with a convent, while the valley opened on the side and spread into a calm and very pleasant view. Of the other apartments one served as a saloon, but there was nothing in it remarkable, except an admirably painted portrait of a very beautiful woman, which the servant informed them was their mistress.

"But that surely is not a German physiognomy?" said Lady Annabel.

"The mistress is an Italian," replied the servant.

"She is very handsome, of whatever nation she may be," replied Lady Annabel.

"Oh! how I should have liked to have met these happy people, mamma," said Venetia, "for happy they surely must be."

"They seem to be good people," said Lady Annabel. "It really lightened my heart to hear of all this gentleman's kind deeds."

"Ah! if the Signora only knew the master," said their guide, "she would indeed know a good man."

They descended to the garden, which certainly was not like the garden of their villa; it had been but lately a wilderness of laurels, but there were evidences that the eye and hand of taste were commencing its restoration with effect.

"The master did this," said their guide. "He will allow no one to work in the garden but himself. It is a week since he went to Bologna, to see our Paulo. He gained a prize at the academy, and his father begged the master to be present when it was conferred on him; he said it would do his son so much good! So the master went, though it is the only time he has quitted Quà since he came to reside here."

"And how long has he resided here?" inquired Venetia.

"'Tis the second autumn," said the guide, "and he came in the

spring. If the Signora would only wait, we expect the master home to-night or to-morrow, and he would be glad to see her."

"We cannot wait, my friend," said Lady Annabel, rewarding the guide; "but you will thank your master in our names, for the kindness we have experienced. You are all happy in such a friend."

"I must write my name in Petrarch's house," said Venetia. "Adieu! happy Arquâ! Adieu! happy dwellers in this happy valley!"

CHAPTER IV.

JUST as Lady Annabel and her daughter arrived at Rovigo, one of those sudden and violent storms that occasionally occur at the termination of an Italian autumn raged with irresistible fury. The wind roared with a noise that overpowered the thunder; then came a rattling shower of hail, with stones as big as pigeons' eggs, succeeded by rain, not in showers, but literally in cataracts. The only thing to which a tempest of rain in Italy can be compared, is the bursting of a water-spout. Venetia could scarcely believe that this could be the same day of which the golden morning had found her among the sunny hills of Arquâ. This unexpected vicissitude induced Lady Annabel to alter her plans, and she resolved to rest at Rovigo, where she was glad to find that they could be sheltered in a commodious inn.

The building had originally been a palace, and in its halls and galleries, and the vast octagonal vestibule on which the principal apartments opened, it retained many noble indications of the purposes to which it was formerly destined. At present, a lazy inn-keeper who did nothing; his bustling wife, who seemed equally at home in the saloon, the kitchen, and even the stable; and a solitary waiter, were the only inmates, except the Herberts, and a travelling party, who had arrived shortly after them, and who, like them, had been driven by stress of weather to seek refuge at a place where otherwise they had not intended to remain.

A blazing fire of pine wood soon gave cheerfulness to the vast and somewhat desolate apartment into which our friends had been ushered; their sleeping-room was adjoining, but separated. In spite of the lamentations of Pouncefort, who had been drenched to the skin, and who required much more waiting upon than her mistress, Lady Annabel and Venetia at length produced some degree of comfort. They drew the table near the fire; they ensconced themselves behind an old screen; and, producing their books and work notwithstanding the tempest, they contrived to domesticate themselves at Rovigo.

"I cannot help thinking of Arquà and its happy tenants, mamma," said Venetia.

"And yet perhaps they may have their secret sorrows," said Lady Annabel. "I know not why, I always associate seclusion with unhappiness."

Venetia remembered Cherbury. Their life at Cherbury was like the life of the German at Arquà. A chance visitor to Cherbury in their absence, viewing the beautiful residence and the fair domain, and listening to the tales which they well might hear of all her mother's grace and goodness, might perhaps too envy its happy occupiers. But were they happy? Had they no secret sorrows? Was their seclusion associated with unhappiness? These were reflections that made Venetia grave; but she opened her journal, and, describing the adventures and feelings of the morning, she dissipated some mournful reminiscences.

The storm still raged, Venetia had quitted the saloon in which her mother and herself had been sitting, and had repaired to the adjoining chamber to fetch a book. The door of this room opened, as all the other entrances of the different apartments, on to the octagonal vestibule. Just as she was quitting the room, and about to return to her mother, the door of the opposite chamber opened, and there came forward a gentleman in a Venetian dress of black velvet. His stature was considerably above the middle height, though his figure, which was remarkably slender, was bowed—not by years certainly, for his countenance, though singularly emaciated, still retained traces of youth. His hair, which he wore very long, descended over his shoulders, and must originally have been of a light golden colour, but now was severely touched with grey. His countenance was very palid, so colourless indeed that its aspect was almost unearthly; but his large blue eyes, that were deeply set in his majestic brow, still glittered with fire, and their expression alone gave life to a visage, which, though singularly beautiful in its outline, from its faded and attenuated character seemed rather the countenance of a corpse than of a breathing being.

The glance of the stranger caught that of Venetia, and seemed to fascinate her. She suddenly became motionless; wildly she stared at the stranger, who, in his turn, seemed arrested in his progress, and stood still as a statue, with his eyes fixed with absorbing interest on the beautiful apparition before him. An expression of perplexity and pain flitted over the amazed features of Venetia; and then it seemed that, by some almost supernatural effort, confusion amounting to stupefaction suddenly brightened and expanded into keen and overwhelming intelligence. Exclaiming in a frenzied tone, "My father!" Venetia sprang forward, and fell senseless on the stranger's breast.

Such, after so much mystery, so many aspirations, so much

anxiety, and so much suffering, such was the first meeting of Venetia Herbert with her father!

Marmion Herbert, himself trembling and speechless, bore the apparently lifeless Venetia into his apartment. Not permitting her for a moment to quit his embrace, he seated himself, and gazed silently on the inanimate and unknown form he held so strangely within his arms. Those lips, now closed as if in death, had uttered however one word which thrilled to his heart, and still echoed, like a supernatural annunciation, within his ear. He examined with an eye of agitated scrutiny the fair features no longer sensible of his presence. He gazed upon that transparent brow, as if he would read some secret in its pellucid veins; and touched those long locks of golden hair, with a trembling finger, that seemed to be wildly seeking for some vague and miraculous proof of inexpressible identity. The fair creature had called him "Father." His dreaming reveries had never pictured a being half so beautiful! She called him "Father!" The word had touched his brain, as lightning cuts a tree. He looked around him with a distracted air, then gazed on the tranced form he held with a glance which would have penetrated her soul, and murmured unconsciously the wild word she had uttered. She called him "Father!" He dared not think who she might be. His thoughts were wandering in a distant land; visions of another life, another country, rose before him, troubled and obscure. Baffled aspirations, and hopes blighted in the bud, and the cherished secrets of his lorn existence, clustered like clouds upon his perplexed, yet creative, brain. She called him "Father!" It was a word to make him mad. "Father!" This beautiful being had called him "Father," and seemed to have expired, as it were, in the irresistible expression. His heart yearned to her; he had met her embrace with an inexplicable sympathy; her devotion had seemed, as it were, her duty and his right. Yet who was she? He was a father. It was a fact—a fact alike full of solace and mortification—the consciousness of which never deserted him. But he was the father of an unknown child—to him the child of his poetic dreams, rather than his reality. And now there came this radiant creature, and called him "Father!" Was he awake, and in the harsh busy world; or was it the apparition of an over-excited imagination, brooding too constantly on one fond idea, on which he now gazed so fixedly? Was this some spirit? Would that she would speak again! Would that those sealed lips would part and utter but one word—would but again call him "Father," and he asked no more!

"Father!"—to be called "Father" by one whom he could not name, by one over whom he mused in solitude, by one to whom he had poured forth all the passion of his desolate soul; to be called "Father" by this being was the aspiring secret of his life. He

had painted her to himself in his loneliness, he had conjured up dreams of ineffable loveliness, and inexpressible love ; he had led with her an imaginary life of thrilling tenderness ; he had indulged in a delicious fancy of mutual interchange of the most exquisite offices of our nature ; and then, when he had sometimes looked around him, and found no daughter there, no beaming countenance of purity to greet him with its constant smile, and receive the quick and ceaseless tribute of his vigilant affection, the tears had stolen down his lately-excited features, all the consoling beauty of his visions had vanished into air, he had felt the deep curse of his desolation, and had anathematised the cunning brain that made his misery a thousand-fold keener by the mockery of its transporting illusions.

And now there came this transcendent creature, with a form more glowing than all his dreams ; a voice more musical than a seraphic chorus, though it had uttered but one thrilling word : there came this transcendent creature, beaming with grace, beauty, and love, and had fallen upon his heart, and called him "Father!"

Herbert looked up to heaven as if waiting for some fresh miracle to terminate the harrowing suspense of his tortured mind ; Herbert looked down upon his mysterious companion ; the rose was gradually returning to her cheek, her lips seemed to tremble with reviving breath. There was only one word more strange to his ear than that which she had uttered, but an irresistible impulse sent forth the sound.

"Venetia!" he exclaimed.

The eyes of the maiden slowly opened ; she stared around her with a vague glance of perplexity, not unmingled with pain ; she looked up ; she caught the rapt gaze of her father, bending over her with fondness yet with fear ; his lips moved, for a moment they refused to articulate, yet at length they again uttered—"Venetia!" And the only response she made was to cling to him with nervous energy, and hide her face in his bosom.

Herbert pressed her to his heart. Yet even now he hesitated to credit the incredible union. Again he called her by her name, but added with rising confidence, "My Venetia!"

"Your child, your child," she murmured. "Your own Venetia."

He pressed his lips to hers ; he breathed over her a thousand blessings ; she felt his tears trickling on her neck.

At length Venetia looked up and sighed ; she was exhausted by the violence of her emotions : her father relaxed his grasp with infinite tenderness, watching her with delicate solicitude ; she leaned her arm upon his shoulder with downcast eyes.

Herbert gently took her disengaged hand, and pressed it to his lips. "I am as in a dream," murmured Venetia.

"The daughter of my heart has found her sire," said Herbert

in an impassioned voice. "The father who has long lived upon her fancied image; the father, I fear, she has been bred up to hate."

"Oh! no, no," said Venetia, speaking rapidly and with a slight shiver, "not hate; it was a secret, his being was a secret, his name was never mentioned; it was unknown."

"A secret! My existence a secret from my child, my beautiful, fond child!" exclaimed Herbert in a tone even more desolate than bitter. "Why did they not let you at least hate me!"

"My father!" said Venetia, in a firmer voice, and with returning animation, yet gazing around her with a still distracted air. "Am I with my father? The clouds clear from my brain. I remember that we met. Where was it? Was it at Arquâ? In the garden? I am with my father!" she continued in a rapid tone, and with a wild smile. "Oh! let me look on him!" and she turned round, and gazed upon Herbert with a serious scrutiny. "Are you my father?" she continued, in a still, small voice. "Your hair has grown grey since last I saw you; it was golden then, like mine. I know you are my father," she added, after a pause, and in a tone almost of gaiety. "You cannot deceive me. I know your name. They did not tell it me; I found it out myself, but it made me very ill, very; and I do not think I have ever been quite well since. You are Marmion Herbert. My mother had a dog called Marmion, when I was a little girl, but I did not know I had a father then."

"Venetia!" exclaimed Herbert, with streaming eyes, as he listened with anguish to these incoherent sentences. "My Venetia loves me!"

"Oh! she always loved you," replied Venetia; "always, always. Before she knew her father she loved him. I dare say you think I do not love you, because I am not used to speak to a father. Everything must be learnt, you know," she said, with a faint, sad smile; "and then it was so sudden! I do not think my mother knows it yet. And after all, though I found you out in a moment, still, I know not why, I thought it was a picture. But I read your verses, and I knew them by heart at once; but now my memory has worn out, for I am ill, and everything has gone cross with me. And all because my father wrote me verses. 'Tis very strange, is it not?"

"Sweet lamb of my affections," exclaimed Herbert to himself, "I fear me much this sudden meeting with one from whose bosom you ought never to have been estranged, has been for the moment too great a trial for this delicate brain."

"I will not tell my mother," said Venetia; "she will be angry."

"Your mother, darling, where is your mother?" said Herbert, looking, if possible, paler than he was wont.

"She was at Arquâ with me, and on the lake for months, but

where we are now, I cannot say. If I could only remember where we are now," she added with earnestness, and with a struggle to collect herself, "I should know everything."

"This is Rovigo, my child, the inn of Rovigo. You are travelling with your mother. Is it not so?"

"Yes! and we came this morning, and it rained. Now I know everything," said Venetia, with an animated and even cheerful air.

"And we met in the vestibule, my sweet," continued Herbert, in a soothing voice; "we came out of opposite chambers, and you knew me; my Venetia knew me. Try to tell me, my darling," he added, in a tone of coaxing fondness, "try to remember how Venetia knew her father."

"He was so like his picture at Cherbury," replied Venetia.

"Cherbury!" exclaimed Herbert, with a deep-drawn sigh.

"Only your hair has grown grey, dear father; but it is long, quite as long as in your picture."

"Her dog called Marmion!" murmured Herbert to himself, "and my portrait, too! You saw your father's portrait, then, every day, love?"

"Oh, no!" said Venetia, shaking her head, "only once, only once. And I never told mamma. It was where no one could go, but I went there one day. It was in a room that no one ever entered except mamma, but I entered it. I stole the key, and had a fever, and in my fever I confessed all. But I never knew it. Mamma never told me I confessed it, until many, many years afterwards. It was the first, the only time she ever mentioned to me your name, my father."

"And she told you to shun me, to hate me? She told you I was a villain, a profligate, a demon? eh? eh? Was it not so, Venetia?"

"She told me that you had broken her heart," said Venetia; "and she prayed to God that her child might not be so miserable."

"Oh! my Venetia," exclaimed Herbert, pressing her to his breast, and in a voice stifled with emotion, "I feel, now, we might have been happy!"

In the meantime, the prolonged absence of her daughter surprised Lady Annabel. At length she rose, and walked into their adjoining apartment, but to her surprise Venetia was not there. Returning to her saloon, she found Pauncefort and the waiter arranging the table for dinner.

"Where is Miss Herbert, Pauncefort?" inquired Lady Annabel.

"I am sure, my lady, I cannot say. I have no doubt she is in the other room."

"She is not there, for I have just quitted it," replied Lady

Annabel. "How very strange! You have not seen the Signora?" inquired Lady Annabel, of the waiter.

"The Signora is in the room with the gentleman."

"The gentleman!" exclaimed Lady Annabel. "Tell me, good man, what do you mean? I am inquiring for my daughter."

"I know well the Signora is talking of her daughter," replied the waiter.

"But do you know my daughter by sight? Surely you must mean some one else."

"Do I know the Signora's daughter!" said the waiter. "The beautiful young lady, with hair like Santa Marguerita, in the church of the Holy Trinity! I tell the Signora, I saw her carried into numero 4, in the arms of the Signor Forestiere, who arrived this morning."

"Venetia is ill," said Lady Annabel. "Show me to the room, my friend."

Lady Annabel accordingly, with a hurried step, following her guide, quitted the chamber. Pauncefort remained fixed to the earth, the very picture of perplexity.

"Well, to be sure!" she exclaimed, "was anything ever so strange! In the arms of Signor Forestiere! Forestiere! An English name. There is no person of the name of Forest that I know. And in his arms, too! I should not wonder if it was my lord after all. Well, I should be glad if he were to come to light again, for, after all, my lady may say what she likes, but if Miss Venetia don't marry Lord Cadurcis, I must say marriages were never made in heaven!"

CHAPTER V.

THE waiter threw open the door of Mr. Herbert's chamber, and Lady Annabel swept in with a majesty she generally assumed when about to meet strangers. The first thing she beheld was her daughter in the arms of a man, whose head was bent, and who was embracing her. Notwithstanding this astounding spectacle, Lady Annabel neither started nor screamed; she only said in an audible tone, and one rather expressing astonishment than agitation, "Venetia!"

Immediately the stranger looked up, and Lady Annabel beheld her husband!

She was rooted to the earth. She turned deadly pale; for a

moment her countenance expressed only terror, but the terror quickly changed into aversion. Suddenly she rushed forward, and exclaimed in a tone in which decision conquered dismay, "Restore me my child!"

The moment Herbert had recognised his wife, he had dexterously disengaged himself from the grasp of Venetia, whom he left on the chair, and meeting Lady Annabel with extended arms, that seemed to deprecate her wrath, he said, "I seek not to deprive you of her; she is yours and she is worthy of you; but respect for a few moments the feelings of a father who has met his only child in a manner so unforeseen."

The presence of her mother instantaneously restored Venetia to herself. Her mind was in a moment cleared and settled. Her past and peculiar life, and all its incidents, recurred to her with their accustomed order, vividness, and truth. She thoroughly comprehended her present situation. Actuated by long-cherished feelings and the necessity of the occasion, she rose and threw herself at her mother's feet and exclaimed, "Oh! mother, he is my father, love him!"

Lady Annabel stood with an averted countenance, Venetia clinging to her hand, which she had caught when she rushed forward, and which now fell passive by Lady Annabel's side, giving no sign, by any pressure or motion, of the slightest sympathy with her daughter, or feeling for the strange and agonising situation in which they were both placed.

"Annabel," said Herbert, in a voice that trembled, though the speaker struggled to appear calm, "be charitable! I have never intruded upon your privacy; I will not now outrage it. Accident or some diviner motive has brought us together this day. If you will not treat me with kindness, look not upon me with aversion before our child."

Still she was silent and motionless, her countenance hidden from her husband and her daughter, but her erect and haughty form betokening her inexorable mind. "Annabel," said Herbert, who had now withdrawn to some distance, and leant against a pillar, "will not then nearly twenty years of desolation purchase one moment of intercourse! I have injured you. Be it so. This is not the moment I will defend myself. But have I not suffered? Is not this meeting a punishment deeper even than your vengeance could devise? Is it nothing to behold this beautiful child, and feel that she is only yours? Annabel, look on me, look on me only one moment! My frame is bowed, my hair is grey, my heart is withered; the principle of existence waxes faint and slack in this attenuated frame. I am no longer that

Herbert on whom you once smiled, but a man stricken with many sorrows. The odious conviction of my life cannot long haunt you; yet a little while, and my memory will alone remain. Think of this, Annabel, I beseech you think of it. Oh! believe me, when the speedy hour arrives that will consign me to the grave, where I shall at least find peace, it will not be utterly without satisfaction that you will remember that we met if even by accident, and parted at least not with harshness!"

"Mother, dearest mother!" murmured Venetia, "speak to him, look on him!"

"Venetia," said her mother, without turning her head, but in a calm, firm tone, "your father has seen you, has conversed with you. Between your father and myself there can be nothing to communicate, either of fact or feeling. Now let us depart."

"No, no, not depart!" said Venetia frantically. "You did not say depart, dear mother! I cannot go," she added in a low and half hysterical voice.

"Desert me, then," said the mother. "A fitting consequence of your private communications with your father," she added in a tone of bitter scorn; and Lady Annabel moved to depart, but Venetia, still kneeling, clung to her convulsively.

"Mother, mother, you shall not go; you shall not leave me; we will never part, mother," continued Venetia, in a tone almost of violence, as she perceived her mother give no indication of yielding to her wish. "Are my feelings then nothing?" she then exclaimed. "Is this your sense of my fidelity? Am I for ever to be a victim?" She loosened her hold of her mother's hand, her mother moved on, Venetia fell upon her forehead and uttered a faint scream. The heart of Lady Annabel relented when she fancied her daughter suffered physical pain, however slight; she hesitated, she turned, she hastened to her child; her husband had simultaneously advanced; in the rapid movement and confusion her hand touched that of Herbert.

"I yield her to you, Annabel," said Herbert, placing Venetia in her mother's arms. "You mistake me, as you have often mistaken me, if you think I seek to practise on the feelings of this angelic child. She is yours; may she compensate you for the misery I have caused you, but never sought to occasion!"

"I am not hurt, dear mother," said Venetia, as her mother tenderly examined her forehead. "Dear, dear mother, why did you reproach me?"

"Forget it," said Lady Annabel, in a softened tone; "for indeed you are irreproachable."

"Oh! Annabel," said Herbert, "may not this child be some

atonement—this child, of whom I solemnly declare I would not deprive you, though I would willingly forfeit my life for a year of her affection ; and your—your sufferance,” he added.

“Mother! speak to him,” said Venetia, with her head on her mother’s bosom, who still, however, remained rigidly standing. But Lady Annabel was silent.

“Your mother was ever stern and cold, Venetia,” said Herbert, the bitterness of his heart at length expressing itself.

“Never,” said Venetia, with great energy, “never; you know not my mother. Was she stern and cold when she visited each night in secret your portrait?” said Venetia, looking round upon her astonished father, with her bright grey eye. “Was she stern and cold when she wept over your poems—those poems whose characters your own hand had traced? Was she stern and cold when she hung a withered wreath on your bridal bed, the bed to which I owe my miserable being? Oh! no, my father; sad was the hour of separation for my mother and yourself. It may have dimmed the lustre of her eye, and shaded your locks with premature grey, but whatever may have been its inscrutable cause, there was one victim of that dark hour, less thought of than yourselves, and yet a greater sufferer than both, the being in whose heart you implanted affections whose unfulfilled tenderness has made that wretched thing they call your daughter.”

“Annabel!” exclaimed Herbert, rapidly advancing, with an imploring gesture, and speaking in a tone of infinite anguish, “Annabel, Annabel, even now we can be happy!”

The countenance of his wife was troubled, but its stern expression had disappeared. The long-concealed, yet at length irrepressible emotion of Venetia had touched her heart. In the conflict of affection between the claims of her two parents, Lady Annabel had observed with a sentiment of sweet emotion, in spite of all the fearfulness of the meeting, that Venetia had not faltered in her devotion to her mother. The mental torture of her child touched her to the quick. In the excitement of her anguish, Venetia had expressed a profound sentiment, the irresistible truth of which Lady Annabel could no longer withstand. She had too long and too fondly schooled herself to look upon the outraged wife as the only victim. There was then, at length it appeared to this stern-minded woman, another. She had laboured in the flattering delusion that the devotion of a mother’s love might compensate to Venetia for the loss of that other parent, which in some degree Lady Annabel had occasioned her; for the worthless husband, had she chosen to tolerate the degrading connection, might nevertheless have proved a tender father. But Nature, it seemed, had shrunk from the vain effort of the isolated mother

The seeds of affection for the father of her being were mystically implanted in the bosom of his child. Lady Annabel recalled the harrowing hours that this attempt by her to curb and control the natural course and rising sympathies of filial love had cost her child, on whom she had so vigilantly practised it. She recalled her strange aspirations, her inspired curiosity, her brooding reveries, her fitful melancholy, her terrible illness, her resignation, her fidelity, her sacrifices—there came across the mind of Lady Annabel a mortifying conviction that the devotion to her child, on which she had so rated herself, might after all only prove a subtle form of profound selfishness; and that Venetia, instead of being the idol of her love, might eventually be the martyr of her pride. And, thinking of these things, she wept.

This evidence of emotion, which in such a spirit Herbert knew how to estimate, emboldened him to advance; he fell on one knee before her and her daughter; gently he stole her hand, and pressed it to his lips. It was not withdrawn, and Venetia laid her hand upon theirs, and would have bound them together had her mother been relentless. It seemed to Venetia that she was at length happy, but she would not speak, she would not disturb the still and silent bliss of the impending reconciliation. Was it then indeed at hand? In truth, the deportment of Herbert throughout the whole interview, so delicate, so subdued, so studiously avoiding the slightest rivalry with his wife in the affections of their child, and so carefully abstaining from attempting in the slightest degree to control the feelings of Venetia, had not been lost upon Lady Annabel. And when she thought of him, so changed from what he had been, grey, bent, and careworn, with all the lustre that had once so fascinated her, faded, and talking of that impending fate which his wan though spiritual countenance too clearly intimated, her heart melted.

Suddenly the door burst open, and there stalked into the room a woman of eminent but most graceful stature, and of a most sovereign and voluptuous beauty. She was habited in the Venetian dress; her dark eyes glittered with fire, her cheek was inflamed with no amiable emotion, and her long black hair was disordered by the violence of her gesture.

“And who are these?” she exclaimed in a shrill voice.

All started—Herbert sprang up from his position with a glance of withering rage. Venetia was perplexed, Lady Annabel looked round, and recognised the identical face, however distorted by passion, that she had admired in the portrait at Arquà.

“And who are these?” exclaimed the intruder, advancing. “Perfidious Marmion! to whom do you dare to kneel?”

Lady Annabel drew herself up to a height that seemed to look

down even upon this tall stranger. The expression of majestic scorn that she cast upon the intruder made her, in spite of all her violence and excitement, tremble and be silent: she felt cowed she knew not why.

"Come, Venetia," said Lady Annabel with all her usual composure, "let me save my daughter at least from this profanation."

"Annabel!" said Herbert, rushing after them, "be charitable, be just!" He followed them to the threshold of the door; Venetia was silent, for she was alarmed.

"Adieu! Marmion!" said Lady Annabel, looking over her shoulder with a bitter smile, but placing her daughter before her as if to guard her. "Adieu, Marmion, adieu for ever!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE moon shone brightly on the house of Petrarch, and the hamlet slept in peace. Not a sound was heard, save the shrill voice of the grasshoppers, so incessant that its monotony blended, as it were, with the stillness. Over the green hills and the far expanse of the sheeny plain, the beautiful light of heaven fell with all the magical repose of the serene hour—an hour that brought to one troubled breast, and one distracted spirit, in that still and simple village, no quietude.

Herbert came forth into the balcony of his residence, and leaning over the balustrade, revolved in his agitated mind the strange and stirring incidents of the day. His wife and his child had quitted the inn of Rovigo instantly after that mortifying rencounter that had dashed so cruelly to the ground all his sweet and quickly-rising hopes. As for his companion, she had by his peremptory desire returned to Arquâ alone; he was not in a mood to endure her society, but he had conducted himself to her mildly, though with firmness; he had promised to follow her, and in pursuance of his pledge, he rode home alone.

He was greeted on his return by his servant, full of the visit of the morning. With an irresistible curiosity, Herbert had made him describe every incident that had occurred, and repeat a hundred times every word that the visitors had uttered. He listened with some consolation, however mournful, to his wife's praises of the unknown stranger's life; he gazed with witching interest upon the autograph of his daughter on the wall of his library. He had not confessed to his mistress the relation which the two strangers bore to him; yet he was influenced in conceal-

ing the real circumstances, only by an indefinite sentiment, that made him reluctant to acknowledge to her, ties so pure. The feelings of the parent overpowered the principles of the philosopher. This lady indeed, although at the moment she had indulged in so violent an ebullition of temper, possessed little influence over the mind of her companion. Herbert, however fond of solitude, required in his restricted world the graceful results of feminine superintendence. Time had stilled his passions, and cooled the fervour of his soul. The age of his illusions had long past. This was a connection that had commenced in no extravagant or romantic mood, and perhaps for that reason had endured. He had become acquainted with her on his first unknown arrival in Italy, from America, now nearly two years back. It had been maintained on his side by a temper naturally sweet, and which, exhausted by years of violent emotion, now required only repose; seeking, in a female friend, a form that should not outrage an eye ever musing on the beautiful, and a disposition that should contribute to his comfort, and never ruffle his feelings. Separated from his wife by her own act, whatever might have been its impulse, and for so long an interval, it was a connection which the world in general might have looked upon with charity, which in her calmer hours one would imagine even Lady Annabel might have glanced over without much bitterness. Certainly it was one which, under all the circumstances of the case, could scarcely be esteemed by her as an outrage or an insult; but even Herbert felt, with all his philosophy and proud freedom from prejudice, that the rencounter of the morning was one which no woman could at the moment tolerate, few eventually excuse, and which of all incidents was that which would most tend to confirm his wife in her stoical obduracy. Of his offences towards her, whatever were their number or their quality, this surely was the least, and yet its results upon his life and fortunes would in all probability only be equalled by the mysterious cause of their original separation. But how much more bitter than that original separation was their present parting! Mortifying and annoying as had been the original occurrence, it was one that many causes and considerations combined to enable Herbert to support. He was then in the very prime of youth, very inexperienced, sanguine, restless and adventurous, with the whole world and its unknown results before him, and freedom for which he ever sighed to compensate for the loss of that domestic joy that he was then unable to appreciate. But now twenty years, which, in the career of such a spirit, were equal to a century of the existence of coarser clay, had elapsed; he was bowed with thought and suffering, if not by time; his conscience was light but it was sad; his illusions had

all vanished ; he knew the world and all that the world could bring, and he disregarded them ; and the result of all his profound study, lofty aspirations, and great conduct was, that he sighed for rest. The original catastrophe had been merely a separation between a husband and a wife : the one that had just happened, involved other feelings ; the father was also separated from his child—and a child of such surpassing qualities, that his brief acquaintance with her had alone sufficed to convert his dream of domestic repose into a vision of domestic bliss.

Beautiful Venetia ! So fair, and yet so dutiful ; with a bosom teeming with such exquisite sensibilities, and a mind bright with such acute and elevated intelligence ! An abstract conception of the sentiments that might subsist between a father and a daughter, heightened by all the devices of a glowing imagination, had haunted indeed occasionally the solitary musings of Marmion Herbert ; but what was this creation of his poetic brain, compared with the reality that now had touched his human heart ? Vainly had he believed that repose was the only solace that remained for his exhausted spirit. He found that a new passion now swayed his soul : a passion, too, that he had never proved ; of a nature most peculiar ; pure, gentle, refined, yet ravishing and irresistible, compared with which all former transports, no matter how violent, tumultuous, and exciting, seemed evanescent and superficial : they were indeed the wind, the fire, and the tempest that had gone before, but this was the still small voice that followed, excelled, and survived their might and majesty, unearthly and eternal !

His heart melted to his daughter, nor did he care to live without her love and presence. His philosophical theories all vanished. He felt how dependent we are in this world on our natural ties, and how limited, with all his arrogance, is the sphere of man. Dreaming of philanthropy, he had broken his wife's heart, and bruised, perhaps irreparably, the spirit of his child ; he had rendered those miserable who depended on his love, and for whose affection his heart now yearned to that degree, that he could not contemplate existence without their active sympathy.

Was it then too late ? Was it then impossible to regain that Paradise he had forfeited so weakly, and of whose amaranthine bowers, but a few hours since, he had caught such an entrancing glimpse, of which the gate for a moment seemed about to re-open ? In spite of all, then, Annabel still loved him—loved him passionately, visited his picture, mused over the glowing expression of their loves, wept over the bridal bed so soon deserted ! She had a dog, too, when Venetia was a child, and called it Marmion.

The recollection of this little trait, so trifling, yet so touching, made him weep even with wildness. The tears poured down his

cheeks in torrents, he sobbed convulsively, his very heart seemed to burst. For some minutes he leant over the balustrade in a paroxysm of grief.

He looked up. The convent hill rose before him, bright in the moon; beneath was his garden; around him the humble roofs that he made happy. It was not without an effort that he recalled the locality—that he remembered he was at Arquâ. And who was sleeping within the house? Not his wife—Annabel was far away with their daughter. The vision of his whole life passed before him. Study and strife, and fame and love; the pride of the philosopher, the rapture of the poet, the blaze of eloquence, the clash of arms, the vows of passion, the execration and the applause of millions; both once alike welcome to his indomitable soul! And what had they borne to him? Misery. He called up the image of his wife, young, beautiful, and noble, with a mind capable of comprehending his loftiest and his finest moods, with a soul of matchless purity, and a temper whose winning tenderness had only been equalled by her elevated sense of self-respect; a woman that might have figured in the days of chivalry, soft enough to be his slave, but too proud to be his victim. He called up her image in the castle of his fathers, exercising in a domain worthy of such a mistress, all those sweet offices of life which here, in this hired roof in a strange land, and with his crippled means, he had yet found solacing. He conjured before him a bud by the side of that beauteous flower, sharing all her lustre and all her fragrance—his own Venetia! What happiness might not have been his! And for what had he forfeited it? A dream, with no dream-like beauty; a perturbed, and restless, and agitated dream, from which he had now woke shattered and exhausted.

He had sacrificed his fortune, he had forfeited his country, he had alienated his wife, and he had lost his child: the home of his heroic ancestry, the ancient land whose fame and power they had created, the beauteous and gifted woman who would have clung for ever to his bosom, and her transcendent offspring worthy of all their loves! Profound philosopher!

The clock of the convent struck the second hour after midnight. Herbert started. And all this time where were Annabel and Venetia? They still lived, they were in the same country, an hour ago they were under the same roof, in the same chamber; their hands had joined, their hearts had opened, for a moment he had dared to believe that all that he cared for might be regained. And why was it not? The cause—the cause? It recurred to him with associations of dislike, of disgust, of wrath, of hatred, of which one whose heart was so tender, and whose reason was so clear, could under the influence of no other feelings have been

capable. The surrounding scene, that had so often soothed his mournful soul, and connected it with the last hours of a spirit to whom he bore much resemblance, was now looked upon with aversion. To rid himself of ties, now so dreadful, was all his ambition. He entered the house quickly, and, seating himself in his closet, he wrote these words:—

“You beheld this morning my wife and child; we can meet no more. All that I can effect to console you under this sudden separation shall be done. My banker from Bologna will be here in two days; express to him all your wishes.”

It was written, sealed, directed, and left upon the table at which they had so often been seated. Herbert descended into the garden, saddled his horse, and in a few minutes, in the heart of night, had quitted Arquâ.

CHAPTER VII.

THE moment that the wife of Marmion Herbert re-entered her saloon, she sent for her courier and ordered horses to her carriage instantly. Until they were announced as ready, Lady Annabel walked up and down the room with an impatient step, but was as completely silent as the miserable Venetia, who remained weeping on the sofa. The confusion and curiosity of Mistress Pouncefort were extraordinary. She still had a lurking suspicion that the gentleman was Lord Cadurcis, and she seized the first opportunity of leaving the room, and flouncing into that of the stranger, as if by mistake, determined to catch a glimpse of him; but all her notable skill was baffled, for she had scarcely opened the door before she was met by the Italian lady, who received Mistress Pouncefort's ready-made apology, and bowed her away. The faithful attendant then hurried down stairs to cross-examine the waiter, but, though she gained considerable information from that functionary, it was of a very perplexing nature; for from him she only learnt that the stranger lived at Arquâ. “The German gentleman!” soliloquized Mistress Pouncefort; “and what could he have to say to Miss Venetia! and a married man, too! Well, to be sure there is nothing like travelling for adventures! And I must say, considering all that I know, and how I have held my tongue for nearly twenty years, I think it is very strange indeed of my lady to have any secrets from me. Secrets, indeed! Poh!” and Mistress Pouncefort flounced again into Lady Annabel's room, with a face of offended pride, knocking the books about, dashing

down writing cases, tossing about work, and making as much noise and disturbance as if she had a separate quarrel with every single article under her superintendence.

In the meantime, the carriage was prepared, to which they were obliged almost to carry Venetia, feeble and stupefied with grief. Uncertain of her course, but anxious, in the present state of her daughter, for rest and quiet, Lady Annabel ordered the courier to proceed to Padua, at which city they arrived late at night, scarcely a word having been interchanged during the whole journey between Lady Annabel and her child, though infinite were the soft and soothing attentions which the mother lavished upon her. Night, however, brought no rest to Venetia; and the next day, her state appeared so alarming to Lady Annabel, that she would have instantly summoned medical assistance, had it not been for Venetia's strong objections. "Indeed, dear mother," she said, "it is not physicians that I require. They cannot cure me. Let me be quiet."

The same cause, indeed, which during the last five years had at intervals so seriously menaced the existence of this unhappy girl, was now at work with renovated and even irresistible influence. Her frame could no longer endure the fatal action of her over-excited nerves. Her first illness, however alarming, had been baffled by time, skill, and principally by the vigour of an extremely youthful frame, then a stranger to any serious indisposition. At a later period, the change of life induced by their residence at Weymouth had permitted her again to rally. She had quitted England with renewed symptoms of her former attack, but a still more powerful change, not only of scene, but of climate and country, and the regular and peaceful life she had led on the Lago Maggiore, had again reassured the mind of her anxious mother. This last adventure at Rovigo, however, prostrated her. The strange surprise, the violent development of feeling, the agonising doubts and hopes, the terrible suspense, the profound and bitter and overwhelming disappointment, all combined to shake her mind to its very foundations. She felt for the first time, that she could no longer bear up against the torture of her singular position. Her energy was entirely exhausted; she was no longer capable of making the slightest exertion; she took refuge in that torpid resignation that results from utter hopelessness.

Lying on her sofa, with her eyes fixed in listless abstraction, the scene at Rovigo flitted unceasingly before her languid vision. At length she had seen that father, that unknown and mysterious father, whose idea had haunted her infancy as if by inspiration; to gain the slightest knowledge of whom had cost her such long and acute suffering; and round whose image for so many years

every thought of her intelligence, and every feeling of her heart had clustered like spirits round some dim and mystical altar. At length she had beheld him; she had gazed on that spiritual countenance; she had listened to the tender accents of that musical voice; within his arms she had been folded with rapture, and pressed to a heart that seemed to beat only for her felicity. The blessing of her father, uttered by his long-loved lips, had descended on her brow, and been sealed with his passionate embrace.

The entrance of her mother—that terrible contest of her lacerated heart, when her two parents, as it were, appealed to her love, which they would not share; the inspiration of her despair, that so suddenly had removed the barriers of long years, before whose irresistible pathos her father had bent a penitent, and her mother's inexorable pride had melted; the ravishing bliss that for a moment had thrilled through her, being experienced too for the first time, when she felt that her parents were again united and bound by the sweet tie of her now happy existence;—this was the drama acted before her with an almost ceaseless repetition of its transporting incidents; and when she looked round, and beheld her mother sitting alone, and watching her with a countenance almost of anguish, it was indeed with extreme difficulty that Venetia could persuade herself that all had not been a reverie; and she was only convinced of the contrary by that heaviness of the heart which too quickly assures us of the reality of those sorrows of which fancy for a moment may cheat us into scepticism.

And indeed her mother was scarcely less miserable. The sight of Herbert, so changed from the form that she remembered; those tones of heart-rending sincerity, in which he had mournfully appealed to the influence of time and sorrow on his life, still greatly affected her. She had indulged for a moment in a dream of domestic love, she had cast to the winds the inexorable determination of a life, and had mingled her tears with those of her husband and her child. And how had she been repaid? By a degrading catastrophe, from whose revolting associations her mind recoiled with indignation and disgust. But her lingering feeling for her husband, her own mortification, were as nothing compared with the harrowing anxiety she now entertained for her daughter. To converse with Venetia on the recent occurrences was impossible. It was a subject which admitted of no discussion. They had passed a week at Padua, and the slightest allusion to what had happened had never been made by either Lady Annabel or her child. It was only by her lavish testimonies of affection that Lady Annabel conveyed to Venetia how deeply she sym-

pathised with her, and how unhappy she was herself. She had, indeed, never quitted for a moment the side of her daughter; and witnessed each day, with renewed anguish, her deplorable condition; for Venetia continued in a state which, to those unacquainted with her, might have been mistaken for insensibility, but her mother knew too well that it was despair. She never moved, she never sighed, nor wept; she took no notice of anything that occurred; she sought relief in no resources. Books, and drawings, and music, were quite forgotten by her; nothing amused, and nothing annoyed her; she was not even fretful; she had, apparently, no physical ailment; she remained pale and silent, plunged in an absorbing paroxysm of overwhelming woe.

The unhappy Lady Annabel, at a loss how to act, at length thought it might be advisable to cross over to Venice. She felt assured now, that it would be a long time, if ever, before her child could again endure the fatigue of travel; and she thought that for every reason, whether for domestic comfort or medical advice, or those multifarious considerations which interest the invalid, a capital was by far the most desirable residence for them. There was a time when a visit to the city that had given her a name, had been a favourite dream of Venetia; she had often sighed to be within

“The sea-born city’s walls; the graceful towers
Loved by the bard.”

Those lines of her father had long echoed in her ear; but now the proposition called no light to her glazed eye, nor summoned for an instant the colour back to her cheek. She listened to her mother’s suggestion, and expressed her willingness to do whatever she desired. Venice to her was now only a name; for, without the presence and the united love of both her parents, no spot on earth could interest, and no combination of circumstances affect her. To Venice, however, they departed, having previously taken care that every arrangement should be made for their reception. The English ambassador at the Ducal court was a relative of Lady Annabel, and therefore no means or exertions were spared to study and secure the convenience and accommodation of the invalid. The barge of the ambassador met them at Fusina; and when Venetia beheld the towers and cupolas of Venice, suffused with a golden light and rising out of the bright blue waters, for a moment her spirit seemed to lighten. It is indeed a spectacle as beautiful as rare, and one to which the world offers few, if any, rivals. Gliding over the great Lagune, the buildings, with which the pictures at Cherbury had already made her familiar, gradually

rose up before her ; the mosque-like Church of St. Marc, the tall Campanile red in the sun, the Moresco Palace of the Doges, the deadly Bridge of Sighs, and the dark structure to which it leads.

Venice had not then fallen. The gorgeous standards of the sovereign republic, and its tributary kingdoms, still waved in the Place of St. Marc ; the Bucentaur was not rotting in the Arsenal, and the warlike galleys of the state cruised without the Lagune ; a busy and picturesque population swarmed in all directions ; and the Venetian noble, the haughtiest of men, might still be seen proudly moving from the council of state, or stepping into a gondola amid a bowing crowd. All was stirring life, yet all was silent ; the fantastic architecture, the glowing sky, the flitting gondolas, and the brilliant crowd gliding about with noiseless step—this city without sound—it seemed a dream !

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ambassador had engaged for Lady Annabel a palace on the Grand Canal, belonging to Count Manfrini. It was a structure of great size and magnificence, and rose out of the water with a flight of marble steps. Within was a vast gallery, lined with statues and busts on tall pedestals ; suites of spacious apartments, with marble floors and hung with satin ; ceilings painted by Tintoretto and full of Turkish trophies ; furniture alike sumptuous and massy ; the gilding, although of two hundred years' duration, as bright and burnished as if it had but yesterday been touched with the brush—Sequin gold, as the Venetians tell you to this day with pride. But even their old furniture will soon not be left to them, as palaces are now daily broken up like old ships, and their colossal spoils consigned to Hanway Yard and Bond Street, whence, re-burnished and vamped up, their Titanic proportions in time appropriately figure in the boudoirs of May Fair and the miniature saloons of St. James'. Many a fine lady now sits in a Doge's chair, and many a dandy listens to his doom from a couch that has already witnessed the less inexorable decrees of the Council of Ten.

Amid all this splendour, however, one mournful idea alone pervaded the tortured consciousness of Lady Annabel Herbert. Daily the dark truth stole upon her with increased conviction, that Venetia had come hither only to die. There seemed to the agitated ear of this distracted mother a terrible omen even in the very name of her child ; and she could not resist the persuasion that

her final destiny would, in some degree, be connected with her fanciful appellation. The physicians (for hopeless as Lady Annabel could not resist esteeming their interference, Venetia was now surrounded with physicians) shook their heads, prescribed different remedies and gave contrary opinions; each day, however, their patient became more languid, thinner and more thin, until she seemed like a beautiful spirit gliding into the saloon, leaning on her mother's arm, and followed by Pauncefort, who had now learnt the fatal secret from her mistress, and whose heart was indeed almost broken at the prospect of the calamity that was impending over them.

At Padua, Lady Annabel, in her mortified reveries, outraged as she conceived by her husband, and anxious about her daughter, had schooled herself into visiting her fresh calamities on the head of the unhappy Herbert, to whose intrusion and irresistible influence she ascribed all the illness of her child; but, as the indisposition of Venetia gradually, but surely, increased, until at length it assumed so alarming an aspect that Lady Annabel, in the distraction of her mind, could no longer refrain from contemplating the most fatal result, she had taught herself bitterly to regret the failure of that approaching reconciliation which now she could not but believe would, at least, have secured her the life of Venetia. Whatever might be the risk of again uniting herself with her husband, whatever might be the mortification and misery which it might ultimately, or even speedily, entail upon her, there was no unhappiness that she could herself experience, which for one moment she could put in competition with the existence of her child. When that was the question, every feeling that had hitherto impelled her conduct assumed a totally different complexion. That conduct, in her view, had been a systematic sacrifice of self to secure the happiness of her daughter; and the result of all her exertions was, that not only her happiness was destroyed, but her life was fast vanishing away. To save Venetia it now appeared to Lady Annabel that there was no extremity which she would not endure; and if it came to a question, whether Venetia should survive, or whether she should even be separated from her mother, her maternal heart now assured her that she would not for an instant hesitate in preferring an eternal separation to the death of her child. Her terror now worked to such a degree upon her character, that she even, at times, half resolved to speak to Venetia upon the subject, and contrive some method of communicating her wishes to her father; but pride, the habitual repugnance of so many years to converse upon the topic, mingled also, as should be confessed, with an indefinite apprehension of the ill consequences of a conversation of such a

character on the nervous temperament of her daughter, rained her.

"My love!" said Lady Annabel, one day to her daughter, "do you think you could go out? The physicians think it of great importance that you should attempt to exert yourself, however slightly."

"Dear mother, if anything could annoy me from your lips, it would be to hear you quote these physicians," said Venetia. "Their daily presence and inquiries irritate me. Let me be at peace. I wish to see no one but you."

"But Venetia," said Lady Annabel, in a voice of great emotion, "Venetia——," and here she paused; "think of my anxiety."

"Dear mother, it would be ungrateful for me ever to forget that. But you, and you alone, know that my state, whatever it may be, and to whatever it may be I am reconciled, is not produced by causes over which these physicians have any control, over which any one has control——now," added Venetia, in a tone of great mournfulness.

For here we must remark that so inexperienced was Venetia in the feelings of others, and so completely did she judge of the strength and purity of their emotions from her own, that reflection, since the terrible adventure of Rovigo, had only convinced her that it was no longer in her mother's power to unite herself again with her other parent. She had taught herself to look upon her father's burst of feeling towards Lady Annabel as the momentary and inevitable result of a meeting so unexpected and overpowering, but she did not doubt that the stranger whose presence had ultimately so fatally clouded that interview of promise, possessed claims upon Marmion Herbert which he would neither break, nor, upon reflection, be desirous to question. It was then the conviction that a reconciliation between her parents was now impossible, in which her despair originated, and she pictured to herself her father once more at Arquâ, disturbed, perhaps, for a day or two, as he naturally must be, by an interview so sudden and so harassing; shedding a tear, perhaps, in secret to the wife whom he had injured, and the child whom he had scarcely seen; but relapsing, alike from the force of habit and inclination, into those previous and confirmed feelings, under whose influence, she was herself a witness, his life had been so serene, and even so laudable. She was confirmed in these opinions by the circumstance of their never having heard since from him. Placed in his situation, if indeed an irresistible influence were not controlling him, would he have hesitated for a moment to have prevented even their departure, or to have pursued them; to have sought at any rate some means of communicating with them?

He was plainly reconciled to his present position, and felt that under these circumstances silence on his part was alike kindest and most discreet. Venetia had ceased, therefore, to question the justice or the expediency, or even the adstract propriety, of her mother's conduct. She viewed their condition now as the result of stern necessity. She pitied her mother, and for herself she had no hope.

There was then much meaning in that little monosyllable with which Venetia concluded her reply to her mother. She had no hope "now." Lady Annabel, however, ascribed it to a very different meaning; she only believed that her daughter was of opinion that nothing would induce her now to listen to the overtures of her father. Prepared for any sacrifice of self, Lady Annabel replied, "But there is hope, Venetia; when your life is in question, there is nothing that should not be done."

"Nothing can be done," said Venetia, who, of course, could not dream of what was passing in her mother's mind.

Lady Annabel rose from her seat and walked to the window; apparently her eye watched only the passing gondolas, but indeed she saw them not; she saw only her child stretched perhaps on the couch of death.

"We quitted, perhaps, Rovigo too hastily," said Lady Annabel, in a choking voice, and with a face of scarlet. It was a terrible struggle, but the words were uttered.

"No, mother," said Venetia, to Lady Annabel's inexpressible surprise, "we did right to go."

"Even my child, even Venetia, with all her devotion to him, feels the absolute necessity of my conduct," thought Lady Annabel. Her pride returned; she felt the impossibility of making an overture to Herbert; she looked upon their daughter as the last victim of his fatal career.

CHAPTER IX.

How beautiful is night in Venice! Then music and the moon reign supreme; the glittering sky reflected in the waters, and every gondola gliding with sweet sounds! Around on every side are palaces and temples, rising from the waves which they shadow with their solemn forms, their costly fronts rich with the spoils of kingdoms, and softened with the magic of the midnight beam. The whole city too is poured forth for festival. The people lounge on the quays and cluster on the bridges; the light barks skim

along in crowds, just touching the surface of the water, while their bright prows of polished iron gleam in the moonshine, and glitter in the rippling wave. Not a sound that is not graceful—the tinkle of guitars, the sighs of serenaders, and the responsive chorus of gondoliers. Now and then a laugh, light, joyous, and yet musical, bursts forth from some illuminated coffee-house, before which a buffo disports, a tumbler stands on his head, or a juggler mystifies : and all for a sequin !

The Place of St. Marc, at the period of our story, still presented the most brilliant spectacle of the kind in Europe. Not a spot was more distinguished for elegance, luxury, and enjoyment. It was indeed the inner shrine of the temple of pleasure, and very strange and amusing would be the annals of its picturesque arcades. We must not however step behind their blue awnings, but content ourselves with the exterior scene ; and certainly the Place of St. Marc, with the variegated splendour of its Christian mosque, the ornate architecture of its buildings, its diversified population, a tribute from every shore of the midland sea, and where the noble Venetian, in his robe of crimson silk, and long white wig, might be jostled by the Slavonian with his target, and the Albanian in his kilt, while the Turk, sitting cross-legged on his Persian carpet, smoked his long chibouque with serene gravity, and the mild Armenian glided by him with a low reverence, presented an aspect under a Venetian moon, such as we shall not easily find again in Christendom, and, in spite of the dying glory and the neighbouring vice, was pervaded with an air of romance and refinement, compared with which the glittering dissipation of Paris, even in its liveliest and most graceful hours, assumes a character alike coarse and common-place.

It is the hour of love and of faro ; now is the hour to press your suit and to break a bank ; to glide from the apartment of rapture into the chamber of chance. Thus a noble Venetian contrived to pass the night, in alternations of excitement that in general left him sufficiently serious for the morrow's council. For more vulgar tastes there was the minstrel, the conjuror, and the story-teller, goblets of Cyprus wine, flasks of sherbet, and confectionary that dazzled like diamonds. And for every one, from the grave senator to the gay gondolier, there was an atmosphere in itself a spell, and which, after all, has more to do with human happiness than all the accidents of fortune and all the arts of government.

Amid this gay and brilliant multitude, one human being stood alone. Muffled in his cloak, and leaning against a column in the portico of St. Marc, an expression of oppressive care and affliction was imprinted on his countenance, and ill accorded with the light

and festive scene. Had he been crossed in love, or had he lost at play? Was it woman or gold to which his anxiety and sorrow were attributable, for under one or other of these categories, undoubtedly, all the miseries of man may range. Want of love, or want of money, lies at the bottom of all our griefs.

The stranger came forward, and leaving the joyous throng, turned down the Piazzetta, and approached the quay of the Lagune. A gondolier saluted him, and he entered his boat.

"Whither, Signor?" said the gondolier.

"To the Grand Canal," he replied.

Over the moonlit wave the gondola swiftly skimmed! The scene was a marvellous contrast to the one which the stranger had just quitted; but it brought no serenity to his care-worn countenance, though his eye for a moment kindled as he looked upon the moon, that was sailing in the cloudless heaven with a single star by her side.

They had soon entered the Grand Canal, and the gondolier looked to his employer for instructions. "Row opposite to the Manfrini palace," said the stranger, "and rest upon your oar."

The blinds of the great window of the palace were withdrawn. Distinctly might be recognised a female figure bending over the recumbent form of a girl. An hour passed away and still the gondola was motionless, and still the silent stranger gazed on the inmates of the palace. A servant now came forward and closed the curtain of the chamber. The stranger sighed, and waving his hand to the gondolier, bade him return to the Lagune.

CHAPTER X.

It is curious to recall our feelings at a moment when a great event is impending over us, and we are utterly unconscious of its probable occurrence. How often does it happen that a subject which almost unceasingly engages our mind, is least thought of at the very instant that the agitating suspense involved in its consideration is perhaps about to be terminated for ever! The very morning after the mysterious gondola had rested so long before the Manfrini Palace, Venetia rose for the first time since the flight from Rovigo, refreshed by her slumbers and tranquil in her spirit. It was not in her power to recall her dreams; but they had left a vague and yet serene impression. There seemed a lightness in her heart, that long had been unusual with her, and she greeted her mother with a smile, faint indeed, yet natural.

Perhaps this beneficial change, slight but still delightful, might be attributed to the softness and the splendour of the morn. Before the approach of winter, it seemed that the sun was resolved to remind the Venetians that they were his children; and that, although his rays might be soon clouded for a season, they were not to believe that their parent had deserted them. The sea was like glass, a golden haze suffused the horizon, and a breeze, not strong enough to disturb the waters, was wafted at intervals from the gardens of the Brenta, fitful and sweet.

Venetia had yielded to the suggestion of her mother, and had agreed for the first time to leave the palace. They stepped into their gondola, and were wafted to an island in the Lagune where there was a convent, and, what in Venice was more rare and more delightful, a garden. Its scanty shrubberies sparkled in the sun; and a cypress flanked by a pine-tree offered to the eye unused to trees a novel and picturesque group. Beneath its shade they rested, watching on one side the distant city, and on the other the still and gleaming waters of the Adriatic. While they were thus sitting, renovated by the soft air and pleasant spectacle, a holy father, with a beard like a meteor, appeared and addressed them.

"Welcome to St. Lazaro!" said the holy father, speaking in English; "and may the peace that reigns within its walls fill also your breasts!"

"Indeed, holy father," said Lady Annabel to the Armenian monk, "I have long heard of your virtues and your happy life."

"You know that Paradise was placed in our country," said the monk with a smile. "We have all lost Paradise, but the Armenian has lost his country too. Nevertheless, with God's blessing, on this islet we have found an Eden, pure at least and tranquil."

"For the pious, Paradise exists everywhere," said Lady Annabel.

"You have been in England, holy father?" said Venetia.

"It has not been my good fortune," replied the monk.

"Yet you speak our tongue with a facility and accent that surprise me."

"I learnt it in America where I long resided," rejoined the Armenian.

"This is for your eye, lady," continued the monk, drawing a letter from his bosom.

Lady Annabel felt not a little surprised; but the idea immediately occurred to her that it was some conventual memorial, appealing to her charity. She took the paper from the monk, who immediately moved away; but what was the agitation of Lady Annabel when she recognised the hand-writing of her husband! Her first thought was to save Venetia from sharing

that agitation. She rose quickly; she commanded herself sufficiently to advise her daughter, in a calm tone, to remain seated, while for a moment she refreshed herself by a stroll. She had not quitted Venetia many paces, when she broke the seal and read these lines:—

“Tremble not, Annabel, when you recognise this hand-writing. It is that of one whose only aspiration is to contribute to your happiness; and although the fulfilment of that fond desire may be denied him, it never shall be said, even by you, that any conduct of his should now occasion you annoyance. I am in Venice at the peril of my life, which I only mention because the difficulties inseparable from my position are the principal cause that you did not receive this communication immediately after our strange meeting. I have gazed at night upon your palace, and watched the forms of my wife and our child; but one word from you, and I quit Venice for ever, and it shall not be my fault if you are ever again disturbed by the memory of the miserable Herbert.

“But before I go, I will make this one appeal if not to your justice, at least to your mercy. After the fatal separation of a life, we have once more met: you have looked upon me not with hatred; my hand has once more pressed yours; for a moment I indulged the impossible hope, that this weary and exhausted spirit might at length be blessed. With agony I allude to the incident that dispelled the rapture of this vision. Sufficient for me most solemnly to assure you that four-and-twenty hours had not elapsed without that feeble and unhallowed tie being severed for ever! It vanished instantaneously before the presence of my wife and my child. However you decide, it can never again subsist: its utter and eternal dissolution was the inevitable homage to your purity.

“Whatever may have been my errors, whatever my crimes—for I will not attempt to justify to you a single circumstance of my life—I humble myself in the dust before you, and solicit only mercy; yet whatever may have been my career, ah! Annabel, in the infinite softness of your soul was it not for a moment pardoned? Am I indeed to suffer for that last lamentable intrusion? You are a woman, Annabel, with a brain as clear as your heart is pure. Judge me with calmness, Annabel; were there no circumstances in my situation to extenuate that deplorable connection? I will not urge them; I will not even intimate them; but surely, Annabel, when I kneel before you full of deep repentance and long remorse, if you could pardon the past, it is not that incident, however mortifying to you, however disgraceful to myself, that should be an impassable barrier to all my hopes!

“Once you loved me; I ask you not to love me now. There is

nothing about me now that can touch the heart of woman. I am old before my time; bent with the blended influence of action and of thought, and of physical and moral suffering. The play of my spirit has gone for ever. My passions have expired like my hopes. The remaining sands of my life are few. Once it was otherwise: you can recall a different picture of the Marmion on whom you smiled, and of whom you were the first love. O! Annabel,—grey, feeble, exhausted, penitent,—let me stagger over your threshold, and die! I ask no more; I will not hope for your affection; I will not even count upon your pity; but endure my presence; let your roof screen my last days!”

It was read; it was read again, dim as was the sight of Lady Annabel with fast-flowing tears. Still holding the letter, but with hands fallen, she gazed upon the shining waters before her in a fit of abstraction. It was the voice of her child that roused her.

“Mother,” said Venetia in a tone of some decision, “you are troubled, and we have only one cause of trouble. That letter is from my father.”

Lady Annabel gave her the letter in silence.

Venetia withdrew almost unconsciously a few paces from her mother. She felt this to be the crisis of her life. There never was a moment which she believed required more fully the presence of all her energies. Before she had addressed Lady Annabel, she had endeavoured to steel her mind to great exertion. Yet now that she held the letter, she could not command herself sufficiently to read it. Her breath deserted her,—her hand lost its power; she could not even open the lines on which perhaps her life depended. Suddenly, with a rapid effort she glanced at the contents. The blood returned to her cheek,—her eye became bright with excitement,—she gasped for breath,—she advanced to Lady Annabel. “Ah! mother,” she exclaimed, “you will grant all that it desires!”

Still gazing on the wave that laved the shore of the island with an almost imperceptible ripple, Lady Annabel continued silent.

“Mother,” said Venetia, “my beloved mother, you hesitate.” She approached Lady Annabel, and with one arm round her neck, she grasped with the other her mother’s hand. “I implore you, by all that affection which you lavish on me, yield to this supplication. Oh! mother, dearest mother, it has been my hope that my life has been at least a life of duty; I have laboured to yield to all your wishes. I have struggled to make their fulfilment the law of my being. Yes! mother, your memory will assure you, that when the sweetest emotions of my heart were the stake, you

appealed to me to sacrifice them, and they were dedicated to your will. Have I ever murmured? I have sought only to repay your love by obedience. Speak to me, dearest mother! I implore you speak to me! Tell me can you ever repent relenting in this instance! Oh! mother, you will not hesitate; you will not indeed; you will bring joy and content to our long-harassed hearth! Tell me so; I beseech you tell me so! I wish, oh! how I wish, that you would comply from the mere impulse of your own heart! But grant that it is a sacrifice; grant that it may be unwise—that it may be vain;—I supplicate you to make it! I, your child, who never deserted you, who will never desert you, pledging my faith to you in the face of heaven; for my sake, I supplicate you to make it. You do not hesitate—you cannot hesitate; mother, you cannot hesitate. Ah! you would not if you knew all; if you knew all the misery of my life, you would be glad,—you would be cheerful,—you would look upon this as an interposition of Providence in favour of your Venetia; you would, indeed, dear mother!"

"What evil fortune guided our steps to Italy!" said Lady Annabel in a solemn tone, and as if in soliloquy.

"No, no, mother; not evil fortune; fortune the best and brightest," exclaimed her daughter. "We came here to be happy, and happiness we have at length gained. It is in our grasp; I feel it. It was not fortune, dear mother, it was fate, it was Providence, it was God. You have been faithful to Him, and he has brought back to you my father, chastened and repentant. God has turned his heart to all your virtues. Will you desert him? No, no, mother, you will not, you cannot; for his sake, for your own sake, and for your child's, you will not!"

"For twenty years I have acted from an imperious sense of duty," said Lady Annabel, "and for your sake, Venetia, as much as for my own. Shall the feeling of a moment——"

"Oh! mother, dearest mother, say not these words. With me, at least, it has not been the feeling of a moment. It haunted my infancy; it harassed me while a girl; it has brought me in the prime of womanhood to the brink of the grave. And with you, mother, has it been the feeling of a moment! Ah! you ever loved him, when his name was never breathed by those lips. You loved him when you deemed he had forgotten you; when you pictured him to yourself in all the pride of health and genius, wanton and daring; and now, now that he comes to you penitent, perhaps dying, more like a remorseful spirit than a breathing being, and humbles himself before you, and appeals only to your mercy, ah! my mother, you cannot reject, you could not reject him, even if you were alone,—even if you had no child!"

"My child ! my child ! all my hopes were in my child," murmured Lady Annabel.

"Is she not by your side ?" said Venetia.

"You know not what you ask ; you know not what you counsel," said Lady Annabel. "It has been the prayer and effort of my life that you should never know. There is a bitterness in the reconciliation which follows long estrangement, that yields a pang more acute even than the first disunion. Shall I be called upon to mourn over the wasted happiness of twenty years ? Why did he not hate us ?"

"The pang is already felt, mother," said Venetia. "Reject my father, but you cannot resume the feelings of a month back. You have seen him ; you have listened to him. He is no longer the character which justified your conduct, and upheld you under the trial. His image has entered your soul ; your heart is softened. Bid him quit Venice without seeing you, and you will remain the most miserable of women."

"On his head, then, be the final desolation," said Lady Annabel ; "it is but a part of the lot that he has yielded me."

"I am silent," said Venetia, relaxing her grasp. "I see that your child is not permitted to enter into your considerations." She turned away.

"Venetia !" said her mother.

"Mother !" said Venetia, looking back, but not returning.

"Return one moment to me."

Venetia slowly rejoined her. Lady Annabel spoke in a kind and gentle, though serious tone.

"Venetia," she said, "what I am about to speak is not the impulse of the moment, but has been long revolved in my mind ; do not, therefore, misapprehend it. I express without passion what I believe to be truth. I am persuaded that the presence of your father is necessary to your happiness ; nay, more, to your life. I recognise the mysterious influence which he has ever exercised over your existence. I feel it impossible for me any longer to struggle against a power to which I bow. Be happy, then, my daughter, and live. Fly to your father, and be to him as matchless a child as you have been to me." She uttered these last words in a choking voice.

"Is this, indeed, the dictate of your calm judgment, mother ?" said Venetia.

"I call God to witness, it has of late been more than once on my lips. The other night, when I spoke of Rovigo, I was about to express this."

"Then mother," said Venetia, "I find that I have been misunderstood. At least I thought my feelings towards yourself

had been appreciated. They have not; and I can truly say, my life does not afford a single circumstance to which I can look back with content. Well will it indeed be for me to die!"

"The dream of my life," said Lady Annabel in a tone of infinite distress, "was that she, at least, should never know unhappiness. It was indeed a dream."

There was now a silence of several minutes. Lady Annabel remained in exactly the same position, Venetia standing at a little distance from her, looking resigned and sorrowful.

"Venetia," at length said Lady Annabel, "why are you silent?"

"Mother, I have no more to say. I pretend not to act in this life; it is my duty to follow you."

"And your inclination?" inquired Lady Annabel.

"I have ceased to have a wish upon any subject," said Venetia.

"Venetia," said Lady Annabel with a great effort, "I am miserable."

This unprecedented confession of suffering from the strong mind of her mother, melted Venetia to the heart. She advanced, and threw her arms round her mother's neck, and buried her weeping face in Lady Annabel's bosom.

"Speak to me, my daughter," said Lady Annabel; "counsel me, for my mind trembles; anxiety has weakened it. Nay, I beseech you, speak. Speak, speak, Venetia. What shall I do?"

"Mother, I will never say anything again but that I love you?"

"I see the holy father in the distance. Let us walk to him, my child, and meet him."

Accordingly Lady Annabel, now leaning on Venetia, approached the monk. About five minutes elapsed before they reached him, during which not a word was spoken.

"Holy father," said Lady Annabel in a tone of firmness that surprised her daughter and made her tremble with anticipation, "you know the writer of this letter?"

"He is my friend of many years, lady," replied the Armenian; "I knew him in America. I owe to him my life, and more than my life. There breathes not his equal among men."

A tear started to the eye of Lady Annabel; she recalled the terms in which the household at Arquâ had spoken of Herbert. "He is in Venice?" she inquired.

"He is within these walls," the monk replied.

Venetia, scarcely able to stand, felt her mother start. After a momentary pause, Lady Annabel said, "Can I speak with him, and alone?"

Nothing but the most nervous apprehension of throwing any obstacle in the way of the interview could have sustained Venetia.

Quite pale, with her disengaged hand clenched, not a word escaped her lips. She hung upon the answer of the monk.

"You can see him, and alone," said the monk. "He is now in the sacristy. Follow me."

"Venetia," said Lady Annabel, "remain in this garden. I will accompany this holy man. Stop! embrace me before I go, and," she added, in a whisper, "pray for me."

It needed not the admonition of her mother to induce Venetia to seek refuge in prayer, in this agony of her life. But for its salutary and stilling influence, it seemed to her that she must have forfeited all control over her mind. The suspense was too terrible for human aid to support her. Seated by the sea-side, she covered her face with her hands, and invoked the Supreme assistance. More than an hour passed away. Venetia looked up. Two beautiful birds, of strange form and spotless plumage, that perhaps had wandered from the Egean, were hovering over her head, bright and glancing in the sun. She accepted their appearance as a good omen. At this moment she heard a voice, and, looking up, observed the monk in the distance, beckoning to her. She rose, and with a trembling step approached him. He retired, still motioning to her to follow him. She entered, by a low portal, a dark cloister; it led to an ante-chapel, through which, as she passed, her ear caught the solemn chorus of the brethren. Her step faltered; her sight was clouded; she was as one walking in a dream. The monk opened a door, and, retiring, waved his hand, as for her to enter. There was a spacious and lofty chamber, scantily furnished, some huge chests, and many sacred garments. At the extreme distance her mother was reclined on a bench, her head supported by a large crimson cushion, and her father kneeling by her mother's side. With a soundless step, and not venturing even to breathe, Venetia approached them, and, she knew not how, found herself embraced by both her parents.

THE END OF THE FIFTH BOOK.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

In a green valley of the Apennines, close to the sea-coast between Genoa and Spezzia, is a marine villa, that once belonged to the Malaspina family, in olden time the friends and patrons of Dante. It is rather a fantastic pile, painted in fresco, but spacious, in good

repair, and convenient. Although little more than a mile from Spezzia, a glimpse of the blue sea can only be caught from one particular spot, so completely is the land locked with hills, covered with groves of chestnut and olive orchards. From the heights, however, you enjoy magnificent prospects of the most picturesque portion of the Italian coast; a lofty, undulating, and wooded shore, with an infinite variety of bays and jutting promontories; while the eye, wandering from Leghorn on one side towards Genoa on the other, traces an almost uninterrupted line of hamlets and casinos, gardens and orchards, terraces of vines, and groves of olive. Beyond them, the broad and blue expanse of the midland ocean, glittering in the meridian blaze, or about to receive perhaps in its glowing waters the red orb of sunset.

It was the month of May, in Italy, at least, the merry month of May, and Marmion Herbert came forth from the villa Malaspina, and throwing himself on the turf, was soon lost in the volume of Plato which he bore with him. He did not move until in the course of an hour he was roused by the arrival of servants, who brought seats and a table, when, looking up, he observed Lady Annabel and Venetia in the portico of the villa. He rose to greet them, and gave his arm to his wife.

"Spring in the Apennines, my Annabel," said Herbert, "is a happy combination. I am more in love each day with this residence. The situation is so sheltered, the air so soft and pure, the spot so tranquil, and the season so delicious, that it realizes all my romance of retirement. As for you, I never saw you look so well; and as for Venetia, I can scarcely believe this rosy nymph could have been our pale-eyed girl, who cost us such anxiety!"

"Our breakfast is not ready. Let us walk to our sea view," said Lady Annabel. "Give me your book to carry, Marmion."

"There let the philosopher repose," said Herbert, throwing the volume on the turf. "Plato dreamed of what I enjoy."

"And of what did Plato dream, papa?" said Venetia.

"He dreamed of love, child."

Venetia took her father's disengaged arm.

They had now arrived at their sea view, a glimpse of the Mediterranean between two tall crags.

"A sail in the offing!" said Herbert. "How that solitary sail tells, Annabel!"

"I feel the sea breeze, mother. Does not it remind you of Weymouth?" said Venetia.

"Ah! Marmion," said Lady Annabel, "I would that you could see Masham once more. He is the only friend that I regret."

"He prospers, Annabel; let that be our consolation: I have at least not injured him."

They turned their steps ; their breakfast was now prepared. The sun had risen above the hill beneath whose shade they rested, and the opposite side of the valley sparkled in light. It was a cheerful scene. " I have a passion for living in the air," said Herbert ; " I always envied the shepherds in Don Quixote. One of my youthful dreams was living among mountains of rosemary, and drinking only goats' milk. After breakfast I will read you Don Quixote's description of the golden age. I have often read it until the tears came into my eyes."

" We must fancy ourselves in Spain," said Lady Annabel ; " it is not difficult in this wild green valley ; and if we have not rosemary, we have scents as sweet. Nature is our garden here, Venetia ; and I do not envy even the statues and cypresses of our villa of the lake."

" We must make a pilgrimage some day to the Maggiore, Annabel," said Herbert. " It is hallowed ground to me now."

Their meal was finished, the servants brought their work, and books, and drawings ; and Herbert, resuming his natural couch, re-opened his Plato, but Venetia ran into the villa, and returned with a volume. " You must read us the golden age, papa," she said, as she offered him, with a smile, his favourite Don Quixote.

" You must fancy the Don looking earnestly upon a handful of acorns," said Herbert, opening the book, " while he exclaims, ' O ! happy age, which our first parents called the age of gold ! not because gold, so much adored in this iron age, was then easily purchased, but because those two fatal words, *meum* and *tuum*, were distinctions unknown to the people of those fortunate times ; for all things were in common in that holy age : men, for their sustenance, needed only to lift their hands, and take it from the sturdy oak, whose spreading arms liberally invited them to gather the wholesome savoury fruit ; while the clear springs, and silver rivulets, with luxuriant plenty, afforded them their pure refreshing water. In hollow trees, and in the clefts of rocks, the labouring and industrious bees erected their little commonwealths, that men might reap with pleasure and with ease the sweet and fertile harvest of their toils. The tough and strenuous cork-trees did, of themselves, and without other art than their native liberality, dismiss and impart their broad light bark, which served to cover those lowly huts, propped up with rough-hewn stakes, that were first built as a shelter against the inclemencies of the air. All then was union, all peace, all love and friendship in the world. As yet no rude ploughshare presumed with violence to pry into the pious bowels of our mother earth, for she without compulsion kindly yielded from every part of her fruitful and spacious bosom, whatever might at once satisfy, sustain, and indulge her

frugal children. Then was the time when innocent, beautiful young shepherdesses went tripping over the hills and vales ; their lovely hair sometimes plaited, sometimes loose and flowing, clad in no other vestment but what the modesty of nature might require. The Tyrian dye, the rich glossy hue of silk, martyred and dissembled into every colour, which are now esteemed so fine and magnificent, were unknown to the innocent simplicity of that age ; yet, bedecked with more becoming leaves and flowers, they outshone the proudest of the vain-dressing ladies of our times, arrayed in the most magnificent garbs and all the most sumptuous adornings which idleness and luxury have taught succeeding pride. Lovers then expressed the passion of their souls in the unaffected language of the heart, with the native plainness and sincerity in which they were conceived, and divested of all that artificial contexture which enervates what it labours to enforce. Imposture, deceit, and malice had not yet crept in, and imposed themselves unbribed upon mankind in the disguise of truth : justice, unbiassed either by favour or interest, which now so fatally pervert it, was equally and impartially dispensed ; nor was the judge's fancy law, for then there were neither judges nor causes to be judged. The modest maid might then walk alone. But in this degenerate age, fraud and a legion of ills infecting the world, no virtue can be safe, no honour be secure ; while wanton desires, diffused into the hearts of men, corrupt the strictest watches and the closest retreats, which, though as intricate and unknown as the labyrinth of Crete, are no security for chastity. Thus, that primitive innocence being vanished, the oppression daily prevailing, there was a necessity to oppose the torrent of violence ; for which reason the order of knighthood errant was instituted, to defend the honour of virgins, protect widows, relieve orphans, and assist all that are distressed. Now I myself am one of this order, honest friends ; and though all people are obliged by the law of nature to be kind persons of my character, yet since you, without knowing anything of this obligation, have so generously entertained me, I ought to pay you my utmost acknowledgment, and accordingly return you my most hearty thanks.'

"There," said Herbert as he closed the book. "In my opinion Don Quixote was the best man that ever lived."

"But he did not ever live," said Lady Annabel, smiling.

"He lives to us," said Herbert. "He is the same to this age as if he had absolutely wandered over the plains of Castille and watched in the Sierra Morena. We cannot, indeed, find his tomb ; but he has left us his great example. In his hero, Cervantes has given us the picture of a great and benevolent philosopher, and in his Sancho, a complete personification of the world, selfish and

cunning, and yet overawed by the genius that he cannot comprehend: alive to all the material interests of existence, yet sighing after the ideal; securing his four young foals of the she-ass, yet indulging in dreams of empire."

"But what do you think of the assault on the windmills, Marmion?" said Lady Annabel.

"In the outset of his adventures, as in the outset of our lives, he was misled by his enthusiasm," replied Herbert, "without which, after all, we can do nothing. But the result is, Don Quixote was a redresser of wrongs, and therefore the world esteemed him mad."

In this vein, now conversing, now occupied with their pursuits, and occasionally listening to some passage which Herbert called to their attention, and which ever served as the occasion for some critical remarks, that were ever as striking from their originality as they were happy in their expression, the freshness of the morning disappeared; the sun now crowned the valley with his meridian beam, and they re-entered the villa. The ladies returned to their cool saloon, and Herbert to his study.

It was there he amused himself by composing the following lines:—

SPRING IN THE APENNINES.

I.

SPRING in the Apennines now holds her court
 Within an amphitheatre of hills,
 Clothed with the blooming chestnut; musical
 With murmuring pines, waving their light green cones
 Like youthful Bacchants; while the dewy grass,
 The myrtle and the mountain violet,
 Blend their rich odours with the fragrant trees,
 And sweeten the soft air. Above us spreads
 The purple sky, bright with the unseen sun
 The hills yet screen, altho' the golden beam
 Touches the topmost boughs, and tints with light
 The grey and sparkling crags. The breath of morn
 Still lingers in the valley; but the bee
 With restless passion hovers on the wing,
 Waiting the opening flower, of whose embrace
 The sun shall be the signal. Poised in air,
 The winged minstrel of the liquid dawn,
 The lark, pours forth his lyric, and responds
 To the fresh chorus of the sylvan doves,
 The stir of branches and the fall of streams
 The harmonies of nature!

II.

Gentle Spring !

Once more, oh, yes ! once more I feel thy breath,
 And charm of renovation ! To the sky
 Thou bringest light, and to the glowing earth
 A garb of grace : but sweeter than the sky
 That hath no cloud, and sweeter than the earth
 With all its pageantry, the peerless boon
 Thou bearest to me—a temper like thine own ;
 A springlike spirit, beautiful and glad !
 Long years—long years of suffering, and of thought
 Deeper than woe, had dimmed the eager eye
 Once quick to catch thy brightness, and the ear
 That lingered on thy music, the harsh world
 Had jarred. The freshness of my life was gone,
 And hope no more an omen in thy bloom
 Found of a fertile future ! There are minds
 Like lands but with one season, and that drear ;
 Mine was eternal winter !

III.

A dark dream

Of hearts estranged, and of an Eden lost
 Entranced my being ; one absorbing thought,
 Which, if not torture, was a dull despair
 That agony were light to. But while sad
 Within the desert of my life I roamed,
 And no sweet springs of love gushed forth to greet
 My wearied heart,—behold two spirits came
 Floating in light, seraphic ministers,
 The semblance of whose splendour on me fell
 As on some dusky stream the matin ray
 Touching the gloomy waters with its life.
 And both were fond and one was merciful !
 And to my home long forfeited they bore
 My vagrant spirit, and the gentle hearth
 I reckless fled, received me with its shade
 And pleasant refuge. And our softened hearts
 Were like the twilight, when our very bliss
 Calls tears to soothe our rapture ; as the stars
 Steal forth, then shining smiles their trembling ray
 Mixed with our tenderness ; and love was there
 In all his manifold forms ; the sweet embrace
 And thrilling pressure of the gentle hand,
 And silence speaking with the melting eye !

IV.

And now again I feel thy breath, O Spring !
And now the seal hath fallen from my gaze,
And thy wild music in my ready ear
Finds a quick echo ! The discordant world
Mars not thy melodies ; thy blossoms now
Are emblems of my heart ; and through my veins
The flow of youthful feeling, long pent up,
Glides like thy sunny streams ! In this fair scene,
On forms still fairer I my blessing pour ;
On her the beautiful, the wise, the good,
Who learnt the sweetest lesson to forgive ;
And on the bright-eyed daughter of our love,
Who soothed a mother, and a father saved !

CHAPTER II.

BETWEEN the reconciliation of Lady Annabel Herbert with her husband, at the Armenian convent at Venice, and the spring morning in the Apennines, which we have just described, half a year had intervened. The political position of Marmion Herbert rendered it impossible for him to remain in any city where there was a representative of his Britannic Majesty. Indeed, it was scarcely safe for him to be known out of America. He had quitted that country shortly after the struggle was over, chiefly from considerations for his health. His energies had been fast failing him ; and a retired life and change of climate had been recommended by his physicians. His own feelings induced him to visit Italy, where he had once intended to pass his life, and where he now repaired to await death. Assuming a feigned name, and living in strict seclusion, it is probable that his presence would never have been discovered ; or if detected, would not have been noticed. Once more united with his wife, her personal influence at the court of St. James', and her powerful connections, might secure him from annoyance ; and Venetia had even indulged in a vague hope of returning to England. But Herbert could only have found himself again in his native country as a prisoner on parole. It would have been quite impossible for him to mix in the civil business of his native land, or enjoy any of the rights of citizenship. If a mild sovereign in his mercy had indeed accorded him a pardon, it must have been accompanied with rigorous and mortifying conditions ; and his presence, in all probability, would have been confined to his country residence and its immediate

neighbourhood. The pride of Lady Annabel herself recoiled from this sufferance; and although Herbert—keenly conscious of the sacrifice which a permanent estrangement from England entailed upon his wife and child—would have submitted to any restrictions, however humiliating, provided they were not inconsistent with his honour, it must be confessed that, when he spoke of this painful subject to his wife, it was with no slight self-congratulation that he had found her resolution to remain abroad under any circumstances was fixed with her habitual decision. She communicated both to the Bishop of ***** and to her brother, the unexpected change that had occurred in her condition, and she had reason to believe that a representation of what had happened would be made to the Royal family. Perhaps both the head of her house and her reverend friend anticipated that time might remove the barrier that presented itself to Herbert's immediate return to England: they confined their answers, however, to congratulations on the reconciliation, to their confidence in the satisfaction it would occasion her, and to the expression of their faithful friendship; and neither alluded to a result which both, if only for her sake, desired.

The Herberts had quitted Venice a very few days after the meeting on the island of St. Lazaro; had travelled by slow journeys, crossing the Apennines, to Genoa; and only remained in that city until they engaged their present residence. It combined all the advantages which they desired: seclusion, beauty, comfort, and the mild atmosphere that Venetia had seemed to require. It was not, however, the genial air that had recalled the rose to Venetia's cheek and the sunny smile to her bright eye, or had inspired again that graceful form with all its pristine elasticity. It was a heart content; a spirit at length at peace. The contemplation of the happiness of those most dear to her, that she hourly witnessed; and the blissful consciousness that her exertions had mainly contributed to, if not completely occasioned, all this felicity, were remedies of far more efficacy than all the consultations and prescriptions of her physicians. The conduct of her father repaid her for all her sufferings, and realised all her dreams of domestic tenderness and delight. Tender, grateful, and affectionate, Herbert hovered round her mother like a delicate spirit who had been released by some kind mortal from a tedious and revolting thralldom, and who believed he could never sufficiently testify his devotion. There was so much respect blended with his fondness, that the spirit of her mother was utterly subdued by his irresistible demeanour. All her sadness and reserve, her distrust and her fear, had vanished; and rising confidence mingling with the love she had ever borne to him, she taught herself even to seek

his opinion, and be guided by his advice. She could not refrain, indeed, from occasionally feeling—in this full enjoyment of his love—that she might have originally acted with too much precipitation; and that, had she only bent for a moment to the necessity of conciliation, and condescended to the excusable artifices of affection, their misery might have been prevented. Once when they were alone, her softened heart would have confessed to Herbert this painful conviction, but he was too happy and too generous to permit her for a moment to indulge in such a remorseful retrospect. All the error, he insisted, was his own; and he had been fool enough to have wantonly forfeited a happiness which time and experience had now taught him to appreciate.

“We married too young, Marmion,” said his wife

“It shall be that then, love,” replied Herbert; “but for all that I have suffered, I would not have avoided my fate on the condition of losing the exquisite present!”

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to remark, that Herbert avoided with the most scrupulous vigilance the slightest allusion to any of those peculiar opinions for which he was, unhappily, too celebrated. Musing over the singular revolutions which had already occurred in his habits and his feelings towards herself, Lady Annabel, indeed, did not despair that his once self-sufficient soul might ultimately bow to that blessed faith which to herself had ever proved so great a support, and so exquisite a solace. It was, indeed, the inexpressible hope that lingered at the bottom of her heart; and sometimes she even indulged in the delightful fancy that his mild and penitent spirit had, by the gracious mercy of Providence, been already touched by the bright sunbeam of conviction. At all events, his subdued and chastened temperament was no unworthy preparation for still greater blessings. It was this hallowed anticipation which consoled, and alone consoled, Lady Annabel for her own estrangement from the communion of her national church. Of all the sacrifices which her devotion to Herbert entailed upon her, this was the one which she felt most constantly and most severely. Not a day elapsed but the chapel at Cherbury rose before her; and when she remembered that neither herself nor her daughter might again kneel round the altar of their God, she almost trembled at the step which she had taken, and almost esteemed it a sacrifice of heavenly to earthly duty, which no consideration, perhaps, warranted. This apprehension, indeed, was the cloud in her life, and one which Venetia, who felt all its validity, found difficulty in combating.

Otherwise, when Venetia beheld her parents, she felt ethereal,

and seemed to move in air ; for her life, in spite of its apparent tranquillity, was to her all excitement. She never looked upon her father, or heard his voice, without a thrill. His society was as delightful as his heart was tender. It seemed to her that she could listen to him for ever. Every word he spoke was different to the language of other men ; there was not a subject on which his richly-cultivated mind could not pour forth instantaneously a flood of fine fancies and deep intelligence. He seemed to have read every book in every language, and to have mused over every line he had read. She could not conceive how one, the tone of whose mind was so original that it suggested on every topic some conclusion that struck instantly by its racy novelty, could be so saturated with the learning and the views of other men. Although they lived in unbroken solitude, and were almost always together, not a day passed that she did not find herself musing over some thought or expression of her father, and which broke from his mind without effort, and as if by chance. Literature to Herbert was now only a source of amusement and engaging occupation. All thought of fame had long fled his soul. He cared not for being disturbed, and he would throw down his Plato for Don Quixote, or close his *Æschylus* and take up a volume of *Madame de Sévigné* without a murmur, if reminded by anything that occurred of a passage which might contribute to the amusement and instruction of his wife and laughter. Indeed, his only study now was to contribute to their happiness. For him they had given up their country and society, and he sought, by his vigilant attention and his various accomplishments, to render their hours as light and pleasant as, under such circumstances, was possible. His muse, too, was only dedicated to the celebration of any topic which their life or themselves suggested. He loved to lie under the trees, and pour forth sonnets to Lady Annabel ; and encouraged Venetia, by the readiness and interest with which he invariably complied with her intimations, to throw out every fancy which occurred to her for his verse. A life passed without the intrusion of a single evil passion, without a single expression that was not soft, and graceful, and mild, and adorned with all the resources of a most accomplished and creative spirit, required not the distractions of society. It would have shrunk from it—from all its artificial excitement and vapid reaction. The days of the Herberts flowed on in one bright, continuous stream of love, and literature, and gentle pleasures. Beneath them was the green earth, above them the blue sky. Their spirits were as clear and their hearts as soft as the clime.

The hour of twilight was approaching, and the family were pre-

paring for their daily walk. Their simple repast was finished, and Venetia held the verses which her father had written in the morning, and which he had presented to her.

"Let us descend to Spezzia," said Herbert to Lady Annabel :
 "I love an ocean sunset."

Accordingly they proceeded through their valley to the craggy path which led down to the bay. After passing through a small ravine, the magnificent prospect opened before them. The sun was yet an hour above the horizon, and the sea was like a lake of molten gold ; the colour of the sky nearest to the sun, of a pale green, with two or three burnished streaks of vapour, quite still, and so thin you could almost catch the sky through them, fixed, as it were, in this gorgeous frame. It was now a dead calm, but the sail that had been hovering the whole morning in the offing, had made the harbour in time, and had just cast anchor near some coasting craft and fishing-boats, all that now remained where Napoleon had projected forming one of the arsenals of the world.

Tracing their way down a mild declivity, covered with spreading vineyards, and quite fragrant with the blossom of the vine, the Herberts proceeded through a wood of olives, and emerged on a terrace raised directly above the shore, leading to Spezzia, and studded here and there with rugged groups of aloes.

"I have often observed here," said Venetia, "about a mile out at sea—there, now, where I point—the water rise. It is now a calm, and yet it is more troubled, I think, than usual. Tell me the cause, dear father, for I have often wished to know."

"It passes my experience," said Herbert ; "but here is an ancient fisherman ; let us inquire of him."

He was an old man, leaning against a rock, and smoking his pipe in contemplative silence ; his face bronzed with the sun and the roughness of many seasons, and his grey hairs not hidden by his long blue cap. Herbert saluted him, and, pointing to the phenomenon, requested an explanation of it.

"'Tis a fountain of fresh water, Signor, that rises in our gulf," said the old fisherman, "to the height of twenty feet."

"And is it constant?" inquired Herbert.

"'Tis the same in sunshine and in storm, in summer and in winter, in calm or in breeze," said the old fisherman.

"And has it always been so?"

"It came before my time."

"A philosophic answer," said Herbert, "and deserves a paul. Mine was a crude question. Adio, good friend."

"I should like to drink of that fountain of fresh water, Annabel," said Herbert. "There seems to me something wondrous fau-

ciful in it. Some day we will row there. It shall be a calm like this."

"We want a fountain in our valley," said Lady Annabel.

"We do," said Herbert; "and I think we must make one; we must inquire at Genoa. I am curious in fountains. Our fountain should, I think, be classical; simple, compact, with a choice inscription, the altar of a Naiad."

"And mamma shall make the design, and you shall write the inscription," said Venetia.

"And you shall be the nymph, child," said Herbert.

They were now within a bowshot of the harbour, and a jutting cliff of marble, more graceful from a contiguous bed of myrtles, invited them to rest, and watch the approaching sunset.

"Say what they like," said Herbert, "there is a spell in the shores of the Mediterranean Sea which no others can rival. Never was such a union of natural loveliness and magical associations! On these shores have risen all that interests us in the past:—Egypt and Palestine, Greece, Rome, and Carthage, Moorish Spain, and feudal Italy. These shores have yielded us our religion, our arts, our literature, and our laws. If all that we have gained from the shores of the Mediterranean was erased from the memory of man, we should be savages. Will the Atlantic ever be so memorable? Its civilization will be more rapid, but will it be as refined? and, far more important, will it be as permanent? Will it not lack the racy vigour and the subtle spirit of aboriginal genius? Will not a colonial character cling to its society?—feeble, inanimate, evanescent. What America is deficient in is creative intellect. It has no nationality. Its intelligence has been imported, like its manufactured goods. Its inhabitants are a people, but are they a nation? I wish that the empire of the Incas and the kingdom of Montezuma had not been sacrificed. I wish that the republic of the Puritans had blended with the tribes of the wilderness."

The red sun was now hovering over the horizon; it quivered for an instant, and then sank. Immediately the high and undulating coast was covered with a crimson flush; the cliffs, the groves, the bays and jutting promontories, each straggling sail and tall white tower, suffused with a rosy light. Gradually that rosy tint became a bright violet, and then faded into purple. But the glory of the sunset long lingered in the glowing west, streaming with every colour of the Iris—while a solitary star glittered with silver light amid the shifting splendour.

"Hesperus rises from the sunset like the fountain of fresh water from the sea," said Herbert. "The sky and the ocean have two natures, like ourselves."

At this moment the boat of the vessel, which had anchored about an hour back, put to shore.

"That seems an English brig," said Herbert. "I cannot exactly make out its trim; it scarcely seems a merchant vessel."

The projection of the shore hid the boat from their sight as it landed. The Herberts rose, and proceeded towards the harbour. There were some rude steps cut in the rock which led from the immediate shore to the terrace. As they approached these, two gentlemen in sailors' jackets mounted suddenly. Lady Annabel and Venetia simultaneously started as they recognised Lord Cadurcis and his cousin. They were so close, that neither party had time to prepare themselves. Venetia found her hand in that of Plantagenet, while Lady Annabel saluted George. Infinite were their mutual inquiries and congratulations, but it so happened that, with one exception, no name was mentioned. It was quite evident, however, to Herbert, that these were very familiar acquaintances of his family; for, in the surprise of the moment, Lord Cadurcis had saluted his daughter by her christian name. There was no slight emotion, too, displayed on all sides. Indeed, independently of the agitation which so unexpected a rencounter was calculated to produce, the presence of Herbert, after the first moments of recognition, not a little excited the curiosity of the young men, and in some degree occasioned the embarrassment of all. Who was this stranger, on whom Venetia and her mother were leaning with such fondness? He was scarcely too old to be the admirer of Venetia, and if there were a greater disparity of years between them than is usual, his distinguished appearance might well reconcile the lady to her lot, or even justify her choice. Had, then, Cadurcis again met Venetia only to find her the bride or the betrothed of another?—a mortifying situation, even an intolerable one, if his feelings remained unchanged; and if the eventful year that had elapsed since they parted had not replaced her image in his susceptible mind by another more cherished, and, perhaps, less obdurate. Again, to Lady Annabel the moment was one of great awkwardness, for the introduction of her husband to those with whom she was recently so intimate, and who were then aware that the name of that husband was never even mentioned in her presence, recalled the painful past with a disturbing vividness. Venetia, indeed, did not share these feelings fully, but she thought it ungracious to anticipate her mother in the announcement.

The Herberts turned with Lord Cadurcis and his cousin; they were about to retrace their steps on the terrace, when Lady Annabel, taking advantage of the momentary silence, and summoning

all her energy, with a pale cheek and a voice that slightly faltered, said, "Lord Cadurcis, allow me to present you to Mr. Herbert, my husband," she added with emphasis.

"Good God!" exclaimed Cadurcis, starting; and then, outstretching his hand, he contrived to add, "have I, indeed, the pleasure of seeing one I have so long admired?"

"Lord Cadurcis!" exclaimed Herbert, scarcely less surprised. "Is it Lord Cadurcis? This is a welcome meeting."

Every one present felt overwhelmed with confusion or astonishment; Lady Annabel sought refuge in presenting Captain Cadurcis to her husband. This ceremony, though little noticed even by those more immediately interested in it, nevertheless served, in some degree, as a diversion. Herbert, who was only astonished, was the first who rallied. Perhaps Lord Cadurcis was the only man in existence whom Herbert wished to know. He had read his works with deep interest; at least, those portions which foreign journals had afforded him. He was deeply impressed with his fame and genius; but what perplexed him at this moment, even more than his unexpected introduction to him, was the singular, the very extraordinary circumstance, that the name of their most celebrated countryman should never have escaped the lips either of his wife or his daughter, although they appeared, and Venetia especially, to be on terms with him of even domestic intimacy.

"You arrived here to-day, Lord Cadurcis?" said Herbert. "From whence?"

"Immediately from Naples, where we last touched," replied his lordship; "but I have been residing at Athens."

"I envy you," said Herbert.

"It would be a fit residence for you," said Lord Cadurcis. "You were, however, in some degree, my companion, for a volume of your poems was one of the few books I had with me. parted with all the rest, but I retained that. It is in my cabin, and full of my scribblement. If you would condescend to accept it, I would offer it you."

Mr. Herbert and Lord Cadurcis maintained the conversation along the terrace. Venetia, by whose side her old companion walked, was quite silent. Once her eyes met those of Cadurcis; his expression of mingled archness and astonishment was irresistible. His cousin and Lady Annabel carried on a more suppressed conversation, but on ordinary topics. When they had reached the olive-grove, Herbert said, "Here lies our way homeward, my Lord. If you and your cousin will accompany us, it will delight Lady Annabel and myself."

"Nothing, I am sure, will give George and myself greater plea-

sure," he replied. "We had, indeed, no purpose when you met us but to enjoy our escape from imprisonment; little dreaming we should meet our kindest and oldest friends," he added.

"Kindest and oldest friends!" thought Herbert to himself. "Well, this is strange indeed."

"It is but a slight distance," said Lady Annabel, who thought it necessary to enforce the invitation. "We live in the valley, of which yonder hill forms a part."

"And there we have past our winter and our spring," added Venetia, "almost as delightfully as you could have done at Athens."

"Well," thought Cadurcis to himself, "I have seen many of the world's marvels, but this day is a miracle."

When they had proceeded through the olive-wood, and mounted the acclivity, they arrived at a path which permitted the ascent of only one person at a time. Cadurcis was last, and followed Venetia. Unable any longer to endure the suspense, he was rather irritated that she kept so close to her father; he himself loitered a few paces behind, and, breaking off a branch of laurel, he tossed it at her. She looked round and smiled; he beckoned to her to fall back. "Tell me, Venetia," he said, "what does all this mean?"

"It means that we are at last all very happy," she replied. "Do you not see my father?"

"Yes; and I am very glad to see him; but this company is the very last in which I expected to have that pleasure."

"It is too long a story to tell now! you must imagine it."

"But are you glad to see me?"

"Very."

"I don't think you care for me the least."

"Silly Lord Cadurcis!" she said, smiling.

"If you call me Lord Cadurcis, I shall immediately go back to the brig, and set sail this night for Athens."

"Well then, silly Plantagenet!"

He laughed, and they ran on.

CHAPTER III.

"Well, I am not surprised that you should have passed your time delightfully here," said Lord Cadurcis to Lady Annabel, when they had entered the villa; "for I never beheld so delightful a retreat. It is even more exquisite than your villa on the lake, of which George gave me so glowing a description. I was

almost tempted to hasten to you. Would you have smiled on me!" he added, rather archly, and in a coaxing tone.

"I am more gratified that we have met here," said Lady Annabel.

"And thus," added Cadurcis.

"You have been a great traveller since we last met?" said Lady Annabel, a little embarrassed.

"My days of restlessness are over," said Cadurcis. "I desire nothing more dearly than to settle down in the bosom of these green hills as you have done."

"This life suits Mr. Herbert," said Lady Annabel. "He is fond of seclusion, and you know I am accustomed to it."

"Ah! yes," said Cadurcis, mournfully. "When I was in Greece, I used often to wish that none of us had ever left dear Cherbury; but I do not now."

"We must forget Cherbury," said Lady Annabel.

"I cannot—I cannot forget her who cherished my melancholy childhood. Dear Lady Annabel," he added in a voice of emotion, and offering her his hand, "forget all my follies, and remember that I was your child, once as dutiful as you were affectionate."

Who could resist this appeal? Lady Annabel, not without agitation, yielded him her hand, which he pressed to his lips. "Now I am again happy," said Cadurcis; "now we are all happy. Sweetest of friends, you have removed in a moment the bitterness of years."

Although lights were in the saloon, the windows opening on the portico were not closed. The evening air was soft and balmy, and though the moon had not risen, the distant hills were clear in the starlight. Venetia was standing in the portico conversing with George Cadurcis.

"I suppose you are too much of a Turk to drink our coffee, Lord Cadurcis," said Herbert. Cadurcis turned and joined him, together with Lady Annabel.

"Nay," said Lord Cadurcis, in a joyous tone, "Lady Annabel will answer for me that I always find everything perfect under her roof."

Captain Cadurcis and Venetia now re-entered the villa; they clustered round the table, and seated themselves.

"Why, Venetia," said Cadurcis, "George met me in Sicily, and quite frightened me about you. Is it the air of the Apennines that has worked these marvels? for really, you appear to me exactly the same as when we learnt the French vocabulary together ten years ago."

"The French vocabulary together, ten years ago!" thought Herbert; "not a mere London acquaintance, then. This is very strange."

"Why, indeed, Plantagenet," replied Venetia, "I was very unwell when George visited us; but I really have quite forgotten that I ever was an invalid, and I never mean to be again."

"Plantagenet!" soliloquised Herbert. "And this is the great poet of whom I have heard so much! My daughter is tolerably familiar with him."

"I have brought you all sorts of buffooneries from Stamboul," continued Cadurcis; "sweetmeats, and slippers, and shawls, and daggers worn only by sultanas, and with which, if necessary, they can keep 'the harem's lord' in order. I meant to have sent them with George to England; for really I did not anticipate our meeting here."

"Sweetmeats and slippers," said Herbert to himself, "shawls and daggers!" What next?

"And has George been with you all the time?" inquired Venetia.

"Oh! we quarrelled now and then, of course. He found Athens dull, and would stay at Constantinople, chained by the charms of a fair Ferote, to whom he wanted me to write sonnets in his name. I would not, because I thought it immoral. But, on the whole, we got on very well; a sort of Pylades and Orestes, I assure you; we never absolutely fought."

"Come, come," said George, "Cadurcis is always ashamed of being amiable. We were together much more than I ever intended or anticipated. You know mine was a sporting tour; and therefore, of course, we were sometimes separated. But he was exceedingly popular with all parties, especially the Turks, whom he rewarded for their courtesy by writing odes to the Greeks to stir them up to revolt."

"Well, they never read them," said Cadurcis. "All we, poor fellows, can do," he added, turning to Herbert, "is to wake the Hellenistic raptures of May Fair; and that they call fame; as much like fame as a toadstool is like a truffle."

"Nevertheless, I hope the muse has not slumbered," said Herbert; "for you have had the happiest inspiration in the climes in which you have resided; not only are they essentially poetic, but they offer a virgin vein."

"I have written a little," replied Cadurcis; "I will give it you, if you like, some day to turn over. Yours is the only opinion that I really care for. I have no great idea of the poetry; but I am very strong in my costume. I feel very confident about that. I fancy I know how to hit off a pasha, or touch in a Greek pirate now. As for all the things I wrote in England, I really am ashamed of them. I got up my orientalism from books, and sultans and sultanas at masquerades," he added, archly. "I remember I

made my heroines always wear turbans ; only conceive my horror when I found that a Turkish woman would as soon think of putting my hat on as a turban, and that it was an article of dress entirely confined to a Bond-street milliner."

The evening passed in interesting and diverting conversation ; of course, principally contributed by the two travellers, who had seen so much. Inspired by his interview with Lady Annabel, and her gracious reception of his overtures, Lord Cadurcis was in one of those frolic humours, which we have before noticed was not unnatural to him. He had considerable powers of mimicry, and the talent that had pictured to Venetia in old days, with such liveliness, the habits of the old maids of Morpeth, was now engaged on more considerable topics ; an interview with a pasha, a peep into a harem, a visit to a pirate's isle, the slave-market, the bazaar, the barracks of the Janissaries ; all touched with irresistible vitality, and coloured with the rich phrases of unrivalled force of expression. The laughter was loud and continual ; even Lady Annabel joined zealously in the glee. As for Herbert, he thought Cadurcis by far the most hearty and amusing person he had ever known, and could not refrain from contrasting him with the picture which his works and the report of the world had occasionally enabled him to sketch to his mind's eye ; the noble, young, and impassioned bard, pouring forth the eloquent tide of his morbid feelings to an idolising world, from whose applause he nevertheless turned with an almost misanthropic melancholy.

It was now much past the noon of night, and the hour of separation, long postponed, was inevitable. Often had Cadurcis risen to depart, and often, without regaining his seat, had he been tempted by his friends, and especially Venetia, into fresh narratives. At last he said, "Now we must go. Lady Annabel looks good night. I remember the look," he said, laughing, "when we used to beg for a quarter of an hour more. O! Venetia, do not you remember that Christmas, when dear old Masham read Julius Cæsar, and we were to sit up until it was finished. When he got to the last act I hid his spectacles. I never confessed it until this moment. Will you pardon me, Lady Annabel?" and he pressed his hands together in a mockery of supplication.

"Will you come and breakfast with us to-morrow?" said Lady Annabel.

"With delight," he answered. "I am used, you know, to walks before breakfast. George—I do not think George can do it, though. George likes his comforts: he is a regular John Bull. He was always calling for tea when we were in Turkey!"

At this moment Mistress Pouncefort entered the room, ostensibly on some little affair of her mistress, but really to reconnoitre.

"Ah! Mistress Pauncefort; my old friend, Mistress Pauncefort, how do you do?" exclaimed his lordship.

"Quite well, my lord, please your lordship; and very glad to see your lordship again, and looking so well too."

"Ah! Mistress Pauncefort, you always flattered me!"

Oh! dear, my lord, your lordship, no," said Mistress Pauncefort, with a simper.

"But you, Pauncefort," said Cadurcis, "why there must be some magic in the air here. I have been complimenting your lady and Miss Venetia; but really, you, I should almost have thought it was some younger sister."

"Oh! my lord, you have such a way," said Mistress Pauncefort, retreating with a slow step that still lingered for a remark.

"Pauncefort, is that an Italian cap?" said Lord Cadurcis; "you know, Pauncefort, you were always famous for your caps." Mistress Pauncefort disappeared in a flutter of delight.

And now they had indeed departed. There was a pause of complete silence after they had disappeared, the slight and not painful "reaction after the mirthful excitement of the last few hours. At length Herbert, dropping, as was his evening custom, a few drops of orange-flower into a tumbler of water, said, "Annabel, my love, I am rather surprised that neither you nor Venetia should have mentioned to me that you knew, and knew so intimately, a man like Lord Cadurcis."

Lady Annabel appeared a little confused; she looked even at Venetia, but Venetia's eyes were on the ground. At length she said, "In truth, Marmion, since we met we have thought only of you."

"Cadurcis Abbey, papa, is close to Cherbury," said Venetia.

"Cherbury!" said Herbert, with a faint blush, "I have never seen it, and now I shall never see it. No matter, my country is your mother and yourself. Some find a home in their country, I find a country in my home. Well," he added, in a gayer tone, "it has gratified me much to meet Lord Cadurcis. We were happy before, but now we are even gay. I like to see you smile, Annabel, and hear Venetia laugh. I feel, myself, quite an unusual hilarity. Cadurcis! It is very strange how often I have mused over that name. A year ago it was one of my few wishes to know him; my wishes, then, dear Annabel, were not very ambitious. They did not mount so high as you have since permitted them. And now I do know him, and under what circumstances! Is not life strange? But is it not happy? I feel it so. Good night, sweet wife; my darling daughter, a happy, happy night!" He embraced them ere they retired; and opening a volume composed his mind after the novel excitement of the evening.

CHAPTER IV.

CADURCIS left the brig early in the morning alone, and strolled towards the villa. He met Herbert half-way to Spezzia, who turned back with him towards home. They sat down on a crag opposite the sea ; there was a light breeze, the fishing boats were out, and the view was as animated as the fresh air was cheering.

"There they go," said Cadurcis, smiling, "catching John Dory, as you and I try to catch John Bull. Now if these people could understand what two great men were watching them, how they would stare ! But they don't care a sprat for us, not they ! They are not part of the world—the three or four thousand civilised savages for whom we sweat our brains, and whose fetid breath perfumed with musk is fame. Pah !"

Herbert smiled. "I have not cared much myself for this same world."

"Why, no ; you have done something, and shown your contempt for them. No one can deny that. I will some day, if I have an opportunity. I owe it them ; I think I can show them a trick or two still*. I have got a Damascus blade in store for their thick hides. I will turn their flank yet."

"And gain a victory where conquest brings no glory. You are worth brighter laurels, Lord Cadurcis."

"Now is not it the most wonderful thing in the world that you and I have met ?" said Cadurcis. "Now I look upon ourselves as something like, eh ! Fellows with some pith in them. By Jove, if we only joined together, how we could lay it on ! Crack, crack, crack ! I think I see them wincing under the thong ; the pompous poltroons ! If you only knew how they behaved to me ! By Jove, sir, they hooted me going to the House of Lords, and nearly pulled me off my horse. The ruffians would have massacred me if they could ; and then they all ran away from a drummer-boy and a couple of grenadiers, who were going the rounds to change guard. Was not that good ? Fine, eh ? A brutish mob in a fit of morality about to immolate a gentleman, and then scampering off from a sentry. I call that human nature !"

"As long as they leave us alone, and do not burn us alive, I am content," said Herbert. "I am callous to what they say."

"So am I," said Cadurcis. "I made out a list the other day of all the persons and things I have been compared to. It begins well, with Alcibiades, but it ends with the Swiss giantess or the Polish dwarf, I forget which. Here is your book. You see it has

* "I think I know a trick or two would turn
Your flanks."

DON JUAN.

been well thumbed. In fact, to tell the truth, it was my cribbing book, and I always kept it by me when I was writing at Athens, like a *gradus*, a *gradus ad Parnassum*, you know. But although I crib, I am candid, and you see I fairly own it to you."

"You are welcome to all I have ever written," said Herbert. "Mine were but crude dreams. I wished to see man noble and happy; but if he will persist in being vile and miserable, I must even be content. I can struggle for him no more."

"Well, you opened my mind," said Cadurcis, "I owe you everything; but I quite agree with you that nothing is worth an effort. As for philosophy and freedom, and all that, they tell devilish well in a stanza; but men have always been fools and slaves, and fools and slaves they always will be."

"Nay," said Herbert, "I will not believe that. I will not give up a jot of my conviction of a great and glorious future for human destinies; but its consummation will not be so rapid as I once thought, and in the meantime I die."

"Ah! Death," said Lord Cadurcis, "that is a botherer. What can you make of death? There are those poor fishermen now; there will be a white squall, some day, and they will go down with those latteen sails of theirs, and be food for the very prey they were going to catch; and, if you continue living here, you may eat one of your neighbours in the shape of a shoal of red mullets, when it is the season. The great secret—we cannot penetrate that with all our philosophy, my dear Herbert. 'All that we know is, nothing can be known.' Barren, barren, barren! And yet what a grand world it is! Look at this bay, these blue waters, the mountains, and these chestnuts—devilish fine! The fact is, truth is veiled, but, like the Sheekinah over the tabernacle, the veil is of dazzling light!"

"Life is the great wonder," said Herbert, "into which all that is strange and startling resolves itself. The mist of familiarity obscures from us the miracle of our being. Mankind are constantly starting at events which they consider extraordinary. But a philosopher acknowledges only one miracle, and that is life. Political revolutions, changes of empire, wrecks of dynasties and the opinions that support them, these are the marvels of the vulgar, but these are only transient modifications of life. The origin of existence is, therefore, the first object which a true philosopher proposes to himself. Unable to discover it, he accepts certain results from his unbiassed observation of its obvious nature, and on them he establishes certain principles to be our guides in all social relations, whether they take the shape of laws or customs. Nevertheless, until the principle of life be discovered, all theories

and all systems of conduct founded on theory must be considered provisional."

"And do you believe that there is a chance of its being discovered?" inquired Cadurcis.

"I cannot, from any reason in my own intelligence, find why it should not," said Herbert.

"You conceive it possible that a man may attain earthly immortality?" inquired Cadurcis.

"Undoubtedly."

"By Jove," said Cadurcis, "if I only knew how, I would purchase an immense annuity directly."

"When I said undoubtedly," said Herbert, smiling, "I meant only to express that I know no invincible reason to the contrary. I see nothing inconsistent with the existence of a Supreme Creator in the annihilation of death. It appears to me an achievement worthy of his omnipotence. I believe in the possibility, but I believe in nothing more. I anticipate the final result, but not by individual means. It will, of course, be produced by some vast and silent and continuous operation of nature, gradually effecting some profound and comprehensive alteration in her order—a change of climate, for instance, the great enemy of life,—so that the inhabitants of the earth may attain a patriarchal age. This renovated breed may in turn produce a still more vigorous offspring, and so we may ascend the scale from the three score and ten of the Psalmist, to the immortality of which we speak. Indeed I, for my own part, believe the operation has already commenced, although thousands of centuries may elapse before it is consummated; the three score and ten of the Psalmist is already obsolete; the whole world is talking of the general change of its seasons and its atmosphere. If the origin of America were such as many profound philosophers suppose, viz. a sudden emersion of a new continent from the waves, it is impossible to doubt that such an event must have had a very great influence on the climate of the world. Besides, why should we be surprised that the nature of man should change? Does not everything change? Is not change the law of nature? My skin changes every year, my hair never belongs to me a month, the nail on my hand is only a passing possession. I doubt whether a man at fifty is the same material being that he is at five-and-twenty."

"I wonder," said Lord Cadurcis, "if a creditor brought an action against you at fifty for goods delivered at five-and-twenty, one could set up the want of identity as a plea in bar. It would be a consolation to an elderly gentleman."

"I am afraid mankind are too hostile to philosophy," said Herbert, smiling, "to permit so desirable a consummation."

"Should you consider a long life a blessing?" said Cadurcis. "Would you like, for instance, to live to the age of Methusalem?"

"Those whom the gods love die young," said Herbert. "For the last twenty years I have wished to die, and I have sought death. But my feelings, I confess, on that head are at present very much modified."

"Youth, glittering youth!" said Cadurcis, in a musing tone; "I remember when the prospect of losing my youth frightened me out of my wits; I dreamt of nothing but grey hairs, a paunch, and the gout or the gravel. But I fancy every period of life has its pleasures, and as we advance in life the exercise of power and the possession of wealth must be great consolations to the majority; we bully our children and hoard our cash."

"Two most noble occupations!" said Herbert; "but I think in this world there is just as good a chance of being bullied by our children first, and paying their debts afterwards."

"Faith! you are right," said Cadurcis, laughing, "and lucky is he who has neither creditors nor offspring, and who owes neither money nor affection, after all the most difficult to pay of the two."

"It cannot be commanded, certainly," said Herbert. "There is no usury for love."

"And yet it is very expensive, too, sometimes," said Cadurcis, laughing. "For my part sympathy is a puzzler."

"You should read Cabanis," said Herbert, "if, indeed, you have not. I think I may find it here; I will lend it you. It has, from its subject, many errors, but it is very suggestive."

"Now, that is kind, for I have not a book here, and, after all, there is nothing like reading. I wish I had read more, but it is not too late. I envy you your learning, besides so many other things. However, I hope we shall not part in a hurry; we have met at last," he said, extending his hand, "and we were always friends."

Herbert shook his hand very warmly. "I can assure you, Lord Cadurcis, you have not a more sincere admirer of your genius. I am happy in your society. For myself, I now aspire to be nothing better than an idler in life, turning over a page, and sometimes noting down a fancy. You have, it appears, known my family long and intimately, and you were, doubtless, surprised at finding me with them. I have returned to my hearth, and I am content. Once I sacrificed my happiness to my philosophy, and now I have sacrificed my philosophy to my happiness."

"Dear friend!" said Cadurcis, putting his arm affectionately in

Herbert's, as they walked along—"for, indeed, you must allow me to style you so—all the happiness and all the sorrow of my life alike flow from your roof!"

In the mean time Lady Annabel and Venetia came forth from the villa to their morning meal in their amphitheatre of hills. Marmion was not there to greet them as usual.

"Was not Plantagenet amusing last night?" said Venetia; "and are not you happy, dear mother, to see him once more?"

"Indeed I am now always happy," said Lady Annabel.

"And George was telling me last night, in this portico, of all their life. He is more attached to Plantagenet than ever. He says it is impossible for any one to have behaved with greater kindness, or to have led, in every sense, a more calm and rational life. When he was alone at Athens, he did nothing but write. George says that all his former works are nothing to what he has written now."

"He is very engaging," said Lady Annabel.

"I think he will be such a delightful companion for papa. I am sure papa must like him. I hope he will stay some time; for, after all, poor dear papa, he must require a little amusement besides our society. Instead of being with his books, he might be walking and talking with Plantagenet. I think, dearest mother, we shall be happier than ever!"

At this moment Herbert, with Cadurcis leaning on his arm, and apparently speaking with great earnestness, appeared in the distance. "There they are," said Venetia; "I knew they would be friends. Come, dearest mother, let us meet them."

"You see, Lady Annabel," said Lord Cadurcis, "it is just as I said: Mr. George is not here; he is having tea and toast on board the brig."

"I do not believe it," said Venetia, smiling.

They seated themselves at the breakfast-table

"You should have seen our Apennine breakfasts in the autumn, Lord Cadurcis," said Herbert; "every fruit of nature seemed crowded before us. It was indeed a meal for a poet or a painter like Paul Veronese; our grapes, our figs, our peaches, our mountain strawberries,—they made a glowing picture. For my part, I have an original prejudice against animal food which I have never quite overcome, and I believe it is only to please Lady Annabel that I have relapsed into the heresy of cutlets."

"Do you think I have grown fatter, Lady Annabel?" said Lord Cadurcis, starting up; "I brought myself down at Athens to bread and olives, but I have been committing terrible excesses lately, but only fish."

"Ah! here is George!" said Lady Annabel.

And Captain Cadurcis appeared, followed by a couple of sailors, bearing a huge case.

"George," said Venetia, "I have been defending you against Plantagenet; he said you would not come."

"Never mind, George, it was only behind your back," said Lord Cadurcis; "and under those legitimate circumstances, why even our best friends cannot expect us to spare them."

"I have brought Venetia her toys," said Captain Cadurcis, "and she was right to defend me, as I have been working for her."

The top of the case was knocked off, and all the Turkish buffooneries, as Cadurcis called them, made their appearance: slippers, and shawls, and bottles of perfumes, and little hand mirrors, beautifully embroidered; and fanciful daggers, and rosaries, and a thousand other articles, of which they had plundered the bazaars of Constantinople.

"And here is a Turkish volume of poetry, beautifully illuminated; and that is for you," said Cadurcis, giving it to Herbert. "Perhaps it is a translation of one of our works. Who knows? We can always say it is."

"This is the second present you have made me, this morning. Here is a volume of my works," said Herbert, producing the book that Cadurcis had before given him. "I never expected that anything I wrote would be so honoured. This, too, is the work of which I am the least ashamed, for my wife admired it. There, Annabel, even though Lord Cadurcis is here, I will present it to you; 'tis an old friend."

Lady Annabel accepted the book very graciously, and, in spite of all the temptations of her toys, Venetia could not refrain from peeping over her mother's shoulder at its contents.—"Mother," she whispered, in a voice inaudible save to Lady Annabel, "I may read this?"

Lady Annabel gave it her.

"And now we must send for Pouncefort, I think," said Lady Annabel, "to collect and take care of our treasures."

"Pouncefort," said Lord Cadurcis, when that gentlewoman appeared, "I have brought you a shawl, but I could not bring you a turban, because the Turkish ladies do not wear turbans; but if I had thought we should have met so soon, I would have had one made on purpose for you."

"La! my lord, you always are so polite!"

CHAPTER V.

WHEN the breakfast was over, they wandered about the valley, which Cadurcis could not sufficiently admire. Insensibly he drew Venetia from the rest of the party, on the pretence of showing her a view at some little distance. They walked along by the side of a rivulet, which glided through the hills, until they were nearly a mile from the villa, though still in sight.

"Venetia," he at length said, turning the conversation to a more interesting topic, "your father and myself have disburthened our minds to each other this morning; I think we know each other now as well as if we were as old acquaintances as myself and his daughter."

"Ah! I knew that you and papa must agree," said Venetia; "I was saying so this morning to my mother."

"Venetia," said Cadurcis, with a laughing eye, "all this is very strange, is it not?"

"Very strange, indeed, Plantagenet; I should not be surprised if it appeared to you as yet even incredible."

"It is miraculous," said Cadurcis, "but not incredible; an angel interfered, and worked the miracle. I know all."

Venetia looked at him with a faint flush upon her cheek; she gathered a flower and plucked it to pieces.

"What a singular destiny ours has been, Venetia!" said Cadurcis. "Do you know I can sit for an hour together and muse over it?"

"Can you, Plantagenet?"

"I have such an extraordinary memory; I do not think I ever forgot anything. We have had some very remarkable conversations in our time—eh, Venetia? Do you remember my visit to Cherbury before I went to Cambridge, and the last time I saw you before I left England? And now it all ends in this! What do you think of it, Venetia?"

"Think of what, Plantagenet?"

"Why, of this reconciliation?"

"Dear Plantagenet, what can I think of it but what I have expressed?—that it is a very wonderful event, but the happiest in my life."

"You are quite happy now?"

"Quite."

"I see you do not care for me the least?"

"Plantagenet, you are perverse. Are you not here?"

"Did you ever think of me when I was away?"

"You know very well, Plantagenet, that it is impossible for me

to cease to be interested in you. Could I refrain from thinking of such a friend?"

"Friend! Poh! I am not your friend; and as for that, you never once mentioned my name to your father, Miss Venetia."

"You might easily conceive that there were reasons for such silence," said Venetia. "It could not arise on my part from forgetfulness or indifference; for even if my feelings were changed towards you, you are not a person that one would, or even could, avoid speaking of, especially to papa, who must have felt such interest in you! I am sure, even if I had not known you, there were a thousand occasions which would have called your name to my lips, had they been uncontrolled by other considerations."

"Come, Venetia, I am not going to submit to compliments from you," said Lord Cadurcis; "no blarney. I wish you only to think of me as you did ten years ago. I will not have our hearts polluted by the vulgarity of fame. I want you to feel for me as you did when we were children. I will not be an object of interest, and admiration, and fiddlestick, to you; I will not submit to it."

"Well, you shall not," said Venetia laughing. "I will not admire you the least; I will only think of you as a good little boy."

"You do not love me any longer, I see that," said Plantagenet.

"Yes I do, Plantagenet."

"You do not love me so much as you did the night before I went to Eton, and we sat over the fire? Ah! how often I have thought of that night when I was at Athens!" he added in a tone of emotion.

"Dear Plantagenet," said Venetia, "do not be silly. I am in the very highest spirits in the world; I am quite gay with happiness, and all because you have returned. Do not spoil my pleasure."

"Ah! Venetia, I see how it is; you have forgotten me, or worse than forgotten me."

"Well, I am sure I do not know what to say to satisfy you," said Venetia. "I think you very unreasonable, and very ungrateful too, for I have always been your friend, Plantagenet, and I am sure you know it. You sent me a message before you went abroad."

"Darling!" said Lord Cadurcis, seizing her hand, "I am not ungrateful, I am not unreasonable. I adore you. You were very kind then, when all the world was against me. You shall see how I will pay them off, the dogs! and worse than dogs, their betters far; dogs are faithful. Do you remember poor old Marmion? How we were mystified, Venetia! Little did we think then who was Marmion's godfather."

Venetia smiled; but she said, "I do not like this bitterness of

yours, Plantagenet. You have no cause to complain of the world, and you magnify a petty squabble with a contemptible coterie into a quarrel with a nation. It is not a wise humour, and, if you indulge it, it will not be a happy one."

"I will do exactly what you wish on every subject," said Cadurcis, "if you will do exactly what I wish on one."

"Well!" said Venetia.

"Once you told me," said Cadurcis, "that you would not marry me without the consent of your father; then, most unfairly, you added to your conditions the consent of your mother. Now both your parents are very opportunely at hand; let us fall down upon our knees and beg their blessing."

"O! my dear Plantagenet, I think it will be much better for me never to marry. We are both happy now; let us remain so. You can live here, and I can be your sister. Will not that do?"

"No, Venetia, it will not."

"Dear Plantagenet!" said Venetia with a faltering voice, "if you knew how much I had suffered, dear Plantagenet!"

"I know it; I know all," said Cadurcis, taking her arm and placing it tenderly in his. "Now listen to me, sweet girl; I loved you when a child, when I was unknown to the world, and unknown to myself; I loved you as a youth not utterly inexperienced in the world, and when my rising passions had taught me to speculate on the character of women; I loved you as a man, Venetia, with that world at my feet, that world which I scorn, but which I will command; I have been constant, Venetia; your heart assures you of that. You are the only being in existence who exercises over me any influence; and the influence you possess is irresistible and eternal. It springs from some deep and mysterious sympathy of blood which I cannot penetrate. It can neither be increased nor diminished by time. It is entirely independent of its action. I pretend not to love you more at this moment than when I first saw you, when you entered the terrace-room at Cherbury and touched my cheek. From that moment I was yours. I declare to you, most solemnly I declare to you, that I know not what love is except to you. The world has called me a libertine; the truth is, no other woman can command my spirit for an hour. I see through them at a glance. I read all their weakness, frivolity, vanity, affectation, as if they were touched by the revealing rod of Asmodeus. You were born to be my bride. Unite yourself with me, control my destiny, and my course shall be like the sun of yesterday; but reject me, reject me, and I devote all my energies to the infernal gods; I will pour my lava over the earth until all that remains of my fatal and exhausted nature is a black and barren cone surrounded by bitter desolation."

"Plantagenet, be calm!"

"I am perfectly calm, Venetia. You talk to me of your sufferings. What has occasioned them? A struggle against nature. Nature has now triumphed, and you are happy. What necessity was there for all this misery that has fallen on your house? Why is your father an exile? Do not you think that if your mother had chosen to exert her influence she might have prevented the most fatal part of his career? Undoubtedly despair impelled his actions as much as philosophy, though I give him credit for a pure and lofty spirit, to no man more. But not a murmur against your mother from me. She received my overtures of reconciliation last night with more than cordiality. She is your mother, Venetia, and she once was mine. Indeed, I love her; indeed, you would find that I would study her happiness. For after all, sweet, is there another woman in existence better qualified to fill the position of my mother-in-law? I could not behave unkindly to her; I could not treat her with neglect or harshness; not merely for the sake of her many admirable qualities, but from other considerations, Venetia,—considerations we never can forget. By heavens! I love your mother; I do, indeed, Venetia; I remember so many things—her last words to me, when I went to Eton. If she would only behave kindly to me, you would see what a son-in-law I should make. You would be jealous, that you should, Venetia. I can bear anything from you, Venetia, but with others, I cannot forget who I am. It makes me bitter to be treated as Lady Annabel treated me last year in London; but a smile and a kind word and I recall all her maternal love; I do, indeed, Venetia; last night when she was kind I could have kissed her!"

Poor Venetia could not answer, her tears were flowing so plentifully. "I have told your father all, sweetest," said Cadurcis; "I concealed nothing."

"And what said he?" murmured Venetia.

"It rests with your mother. After all that has passed, he will not attempt to control your fate. And he is right. Perhaps his interference in my favour might even injure me. But there is no cause for despair; all I wanted was to come to an understanding with you; to be sure you loved me as you always have done. I will not be impatient. I will do everything to soothe and conciliate and gratify Lady Annabel; you will see how I will behave! As you say too, we are happy because we are together; and, therefore, it would be unreasonable not to be patient. I never can be sufficiently grateful for this meeting. I concluded you would be in England, though we were on our way to Milan to inquire after you. George has been a great comfort to me in all this affair, Venetia; he loves you, Venetia, almost as much as I do. I think

I should have gone mad during that cursed affair in England, had it not been for George. I thought you would hate me, but when George brought me your message, I cared for nothing; and then his visit to the Lake was so devilish kind! He is a noble fellow and a true friend. My sweet, sweet Venetia, dry your eyes. Let us rejoin them with a smile. We have not been long away; I will pretend we have been violet hunting," said Cadurcis, stooping down and plucking up a handful of flowers. "Do you remember our violets at home, Venetia? Do you know, Venetia, I always fancy every human being is like some object in nature; and you always put me in mind of a violet, so fresh and sweet and delicate!"

CHAPTER VI.

"WE have been exploring the happy valley," said Lord Cadurcis to Lady Annabel, "and here is our plunder," and he gave her the violets.

"You were always fond of flowers," said Lady Annabel.

"Yes, I imbibed the taste from you," said Cadurcis, gratified by the gracious remark.

He seated himself at her feet, examined and admired her work, and talked of old times, but with such infinite discretion, that he did not arouse a single painful association. Venetia was busied with her father's poems, and smiled often at the manuscript notes of Cadurcis. Lying, as usual, on the grass, and leaning his head on his left arm, Herbert was listening to Captain Cadurcis, who was endeavouring to give him a clear idea of the Bosphorus. Thus the morning wore away, until the sun drove them into the villa.

"I will show you my library, Lord Cadurcis," said Herbert.

Cadurcis followed him into a spacious apartment, where he found a collection so considerable that he could not suppress his surprise. "Italian spoils chiefly," said Herbert; "a friend of mine purchased an old library at Bologna for me, and it turned out richer than I imagined: the rest are old friends that have been with me, many of them at least, at college. I brought them back with me from America, for then they were my only friends."

"Can you find Cabanis?" said Lord Cadurcis.

Herbert looked about. "It is in this neighbourhood, I imagine," he said. Cadurcis endeavoured to assist him. "What is this?" he said; "Plato!"

"I should like to read Plato at Athens," said Herbert. "My ambition now does not soar beyond such elegant fortune."

"We are all under great obligations to Plato," said Cadurcis.

"I remember, when I was in London, I always professed myself his disciple, and it is astonishing what results I experienced. Platonic love was a great invention."

Herbert smiled ; but, as he saw Cadurcis knew nothing about the subject, he made no reply.

"Plato says, or at least I think he says, that life is love," said Cadurcis. "I have said it myself in a very grand way too ; I believe I cribbed it from you. But what does he mean ? I am sure I meant nothing ; but I dare say you did."

"I certainly had some meaning," said Herbert, stopping in his search, and smiling, "but I do not know whether I expressed it. The principle of every motion, that is of all life, is desire or love : at present, I am in love with the lost volume of Cabanis, and, if it were not for the desire of obtaining it, I should not now be affording any testimony of my vitality by looking after it."

"That is very clear," said Cadurcis, "but I was thinking of love in the vulgar sense, in the shape of a petticoat. Certainly, when I am in love with a woman, I feel love is life ; but, when I am out of love, which often happens, and generally very soon, I still contrive to live."

"We exist," said Herbert, "because we sympathise. If we did not sympathise with the air, we should die. But, if we only sympathised with the air, we should be in the lowest order of brutes, baser than the sloth. Mount from the sloth to the poet. It is sympathy that makes you a poet. It is your desire that the airy children of your brain should be born anew within another's, that makes you create ; therefore, a misanthropical poet is a contradiction in terms."

"But when he writes a lampoon ?" said Cadurcis.

"He desires that the majority, who are not lampooned, should share his hate," said Herbert.

"But Swift lampooned the species," said Cadurcis. "For my part, I think life is hatred."

"But Swift was not sincere ; for he wrote the Drapier's Letters at the same time. Besides, the very fact of your abusing mankind proves that you do not hate them ; it is clear that you are desirous of obtaining their good opinion of your wit. You value them, you esteem them, you love them. Their approbation causes you to act, and makes you happy. As for sexual love," said Herbert, "of which you were speaking, its quality and duration depend upon the degree of sympathy that subsists between the two persons interested. Plato believed, and I believe with him, in the existence of a spiritual antetype of the soul, so that when we are born, there is something within us which, from the instant we live and move, thirsts after its likeness. This propensity develops itself with the

development of our nature. The gratification of the senses soon becomes a very small part of that profound and complicated sentiment, which we call love. Love, on the contrary, is an universal thirst for a communion, not merely of the senses, but of our whole nature—intellectual, imaginative, and sensitive. He who finds his antetype, enjoys a love perfect and enduring ; time cannot change it, distance cannot remove it ; the sympathy is complete. He who loves an object that approaches his antetype, is proportionately happy, the sympathy is feeble or strong, as it may be. If men were properly educated, and their faculties fully developed,” continued Herbert, “the discovery of the antetype would be easy ; and, when the day arrives that it is a matter of course, the perfection of civilisation will be attained.”

“I believe in Plato,” said Lord Cadurcis, “and I think I have found my antetype. His theory accounts for what I never could understand.”

CHAPTER VII.

IN the course of the evening Lady Annabel requested Lord Cadurcis and his cousin to take up their quarters at the villa. Independent of the delight which such an invitation occasioned him, Cadurcis was doubly gratified by its being given by her. It was indeed her unprompted solicitation ; for neither Herbert nor even Venetia, however much they desired the arrangement, was anxious to appear eager for its fulfilment. Desirous of pleasing her husband and her daughter ; a little penitent as to her previous treatment of Cadurcis, now that time and strange events had combined to soften her feelings ; and won by his engaging demeanour towards herself, Lady Annabel had of mere impulse resolved upon the act ; and she was repaid by the general air of gaiety and content which it diffused through the circle.

Few weeks indeed passed ere her ladyship taught herself even to contemplate the possibility of an union between her daughter and Lord Cadurcis. The change which had occurred in her own feelings and position had in her estimation removed very considerable barriers to such a result. It would not become her again to urge the peculiarity of his temperament as an insuperable objection to the marriage ; that was out of the question, even if the conscience of Lady Annabel herself, now that she was so happy, were perfectly free from any participation in the causes which occasioned the original estrangement between Herbert and herself. Desirous too, as all mothers are, that her daughter should be suitably married, Lady Annabel could not shut her eyes to the very great improbability of such an event occurring, now that Venetia

had as it were resigned all connection with her native country. As to her daughter marrying a foreigner, the very idea was intolerable to her; and Venetia appeared therefore to have resumed that singular and delicate position which she occupied at Cherbury in earlier years, when Lady Annabel had esteemed her connection with Lord Cadurcis so fortunate and auspicious. Moreover, while Lord Cadurcis, in birth, rank, country, and consideration, offered in every view of the case so gratifying an alliance, he was perhaps the only Englishman whose marriage into her family would not deprive her of the society of her child. Cadurcis had a great distaste for England, which he seized every opportunity to express. He continually declared that he would never return there; and his habits of seclusion and study so entirely accorded with those of her husband, that Lady Annabel did not doubt they would continue to form only one family; a prospect so engaging to her, that it would perhaps have alone removed the distrust which she had so unfortunately cherished against the admirer of her daughter; and although some of his reputed opinions occasioned her doubtless considerable anxiety, he was nevertheless very young, and far from emancipated from the beneficial influence of his early education. She was sanguine that this sheep would yet return to the fold where once he had been tended with so much solicitude. When too she called to mind the chastened spirit of her husband, and could not refrain from feeling that, had she not quitted him, he might at a much earlier period have attained a mood so full of promise and to her so cheering, she could not resist the persuasion that, under the influence of Venetia, Cadurcis might speedily free himself from the dominion of that arrogant genius to which, rather than to any serious conviction, the result of a studious philosophy, she attributed his indifference on the most important of subjects. On the whole, however, it was with no common gratification that Lady Annabel observed the strong and intimate friendship that arose between her husband and Cadurcis. They were inseparable companions. Independently of the natural sympathy between two highly imaginative minds, there were in the superior experience, the noble character, the vast knowledge, and refined taste of Herbert, charms of which Cadurcis was very susceptible. Cadurcis had not been a great reader himself, and he liked the company of one whose mind was at once so richly cultured and so deeply meditative: thus he obtained matter and spirit distilled through the alembic of another's brain. Jealousy had never had a place in Herbert's temperament; now he was insensible even to emulation. He spoke of Cadurcis as he thought—with the highest admiration; as one without a rival, and in whose power it was to obtain an imperishable fame.

It was his liveliest pleasure to assist the full development of such an intellect, and to pour to him, with a lavish hand, all the treasures of his taste, his learning, his fancy, and his meditation. His kind heart, his winning manners, his subdued and perfect temper, and the remembrance of the relation which he bore to Venetia, completed the spell which bound Cadurcis to him with all the finest feelings of his nature. It was, indeed, an intercourse peculiarly beneficial to Cadurcis, whose career had hitherto tended rather to the development of the power, than the refinement of his genius; and to whom an active communion with an equal spirit of a more matured intelligence was an incident rather to be desired than expected. Herbert and Cadurcis, therefore, spent their mornings together, sometimes in the library, sometimes wandering in the chestnut woods, sometimes sailing in the boat of the brig, for they were both fond of the sea: in these excursions, George was in general their companion. He had become a great favourite with Herbert, as with everybody else. No one managed a boat so well, although Cadurcis prided himself also on his skill in this respect; and George was so frank and unaffected, and so used to his cousin's habits, that his presence never embarrassed Herbert and Cadurcis, and they read or conversed quite at their ease, as if there were no third person to mar by his want of sympathy the full communion of their intellect. The whole circle met at dinner, and never again parted until at a late hour of night. This was a most agreeable life; Cadurcis himself, good humoured because he was happy, doubly exerted himself to ingratiate himself with Lady Annabel, and felt every day that he was advancing. Venetia always smiled upon him, and praised him delightfully for his delightful conduct.

In the evening, Herbert would read to them the manuscript poem of Cadurcis, the fruits of his Attic residence and Grecian meditations. The poet would sometimes affect a playful bashfulness on this head, perhaps not altogether affected, and amuse Venetia, in a whisper, with his running comments; or exclaim with an arch air, "I say, Venetia, what would Mrs. Montague and the Blues give for this, eh? I can fancy Hannah More in decent ecstasies!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"It is an odd thing, my dear Herbert," said Cadurcis to his friend, in one of these voyages, "that destiny should have given you and me the same tutor."

"Masham!" said Herbert, smiling. "I tell you what is much

more singular, my dear Cadurcis: it is, that notwithstanding being our tutor, a mitre should have fallen upon his head."

"I am heartily glad," said Cadurcis. "I like Masham very much; I really have a sincere affection for him. Do you know, during my infernal affair about those accursed Monteagles, when I went to the House of Lords, and was cut even by my own party,—think of that, the polished ruffians!—Masham was the only person who came forward and shook hands with me, and in the most marked manner. A bishop, too! and the other side! that was good, was it not? But he would not see his old pupil snubbed; if he had waited ten minutes longer, he might have had a chance of seeing him massacred. And then they complain of my abusing England, my mother country; a step-dame, I take it."

"Masham is in politics a Tory, in religion ultra-orthodox," said Herbert. "He has nothing about him of the latitudinarian; and yet he is the most amiable man with whom I am acquainted. Nature has given him a kind and charitable heart, which even his opinions have not succeeded in spoiling."

"Perhaps that is exactly what he is saying of us two at this moment," said Cadurcis. "After all, what is truth? It changes as you change your clime or your country, it changes with the century. The truth of a hundred years ago is not the truth of the present day, and yet it may have been as genuine. Truth at Rome is not the truth of London, and both of them differ from the truth of Constantinople. For my part, I believe everything."

"Well, that is practically prudent, if it be metaphysically possible," said Herbert. "Do you know that I have always been of opinion, that Pontius Pilate has been greatly misrepresented by Lord Bacon in the quotation of his celebrated question. 'What is truth?' said jesting Pilate, and would not wait for an answer. Let us be just to Pontius Pilate, who has sins enough surely to answer for. There is no authority for the jesting humour given by Lord Bacon. Pilate was evidently of a merciful and element disposition; probably an Epicurean. His question referred to a declaration immediately preceding it, that he who was before him came to bear witness to the truth. Pilate inquired what truth?"

"Well, I always have a prejudice against Pontius Pilate," said Lord Cadurcis; "and I think it is from seeing him when I was a child, on an old Dutch tile fireplace at Marringhurst, dressed like a burgomaster. One cannot get over one's early impressions; but when you picture him to me as an Epicurean, he assumes a new character. I fancy him young, noble, elegant, and accomplished; crowned with a wreath and waving a goblet, and enjoying his government vastly."

"Before the introduction of Christianity," said Herbert, "the philosophic schools answered to our present religious sects. You said of a man that he was a Stoic or an Epicurean, as you say of a man now that he is a Calvinist or a Wesleyan."

"I should have liked to have known Epicurus," said Cadurcis.

"I would sooner have known him and Plato than any of the ancients," said Herbert. "I look upon Plato as the wisest and the profoundest of men, and upon Epicurus as the most humane and gentle."

"Now, how do you account for the great popularity of Aristotle in modern ages?" said Cadurcis; "and the comparative neglect of these, at least his equals? Chance, I suppose, that settles everything."

"By no means," said Herbert. "If you mean by chance an absence of accountable cause, I do not believe such a quality as chance exists. Every incident that happens, must be a link in a chain. In the present case, the monks monopolised literature, such as it might be, and they exercised their intellect only in discussing words. They, therefore, adopted Aristotle and the Peripatetics. Plato interfered with their heavenly knowledge, and Epicurus, who maintained the rights of man to pleasure and happiness, would have afforded a dangerous and seducing contrast to their dark and miserable code of morals."

"I think, of the ancients," said Cadurcis, "Alcibiades and Alexander the Great are my favourites. They were young, beautiful, and conquerors: a great combination."

"And among the moderns?" inquired Herbert.

"They don't touch my fancy," said Cadurcis. "Who are your heroes?"

"Oh! I have many; but I confess I should like to pass a day with Milton, or Sir Philip Sidney."

"Among mere literary men," said Cadurcis, "I should say, Bayle."

"And old Montaigne for me," said Herbert.

"Well, I would fain visit him in his feudal chateau," said Cadurcis. "His is one of the books which give a spring to the mind. Of modern times, the feudal ages of Italy most interest me. I think that was a springtide of civilisation; all the fine arts flourished at the same moment."

"They ever will," said Herbert. "All the inventive arts maintain a sympathetic connection between each other, for, after all, they are only various expressions of one internal power, modified by different circumstances either of the individual or of society. It was so in the age of Pericles; I mean the interval which intervened between the birth of that great man and the death of

Aristotle ; undoubtedly, whether considered in itself, or with reference to the effects which it produced upon the subsequent destinies of civilised man, the most memorable in the history of the world."

"And yet the age of Pericles has passed away," said Lord Cadurcis, mournfully, "and I have gazed upon the mouldering Parthenon. O ! Herbert, you are a great thinker and muse deeply ; solve me the problem why so unparalleled a progress was made during that period in literature and the arts, and why that progress, so rapid and so sustained, so soon received a check and became retrograde."

"It is a problem left to the wonder and conjecture of posterity," said Herbert. "But its solution, perhaps, may principally be found in the weakness of their political institutions. Nothing of the Athenians remains except their genius ; but they fulfilled their purpose. The wrecks and fragments of their subtle and profound minds obscurely suggest to us the grandeur and perfection of the whole. Their language excels every other tongue of the western world ; their sculptures baffle all subsequent artists ; credible witnesses assure us that their paintings were not inferior ; and we are only accustomed to consider the painters of Italy as those who have brought the art to its highest perfection, because none of the ancient pictures have been preserved. Yet of all their fine arts, it was music of which the Greeks were themselves most proud. Its traditionary effects were far more powerful than any which we experience from the compositions of our times. And now for their poetry, Cadurcis. It is in poetry, and poetry alone, that modern nations have maintained the majesty of genius. Do we equal the Greeks ? Do we even excel them ?"

"Let us prove the equality first," said Cadurcis. "The Greeks excelled in every species of poetry. In some we do not even attempt to rival them. We have not a single modern ode or a single modern pastoral. We have no one to place by Pindar, or the exquisite Theocritus. As for the epic, I confess myself a heretic as to Homer ; I look upon the *Iliad* as a remnant of national songs ; the wise ones agree that the *Odyssey* is the work of a later age. My instinct agrees with the result of their researches. I credit their conclusion. The *Paradise Lost* is, doubtless, a great production, but the subject is monkish. Dante is national, but he has all the faults of a barbarous age. In general the modern epic is framed upon the assumption that the *Iliad* is an orderly composition. They are indebted for this fallacy to Virgil, who called order out of chaos ; but the *Æneid*,

all the same, appears to me an insipid creation. And now for the drama. You will adduce Shakspeare ?”

“There are passages in Dante,” said Herbert, “not inferior, in my opinion, to any existing literary composition, but, as a whole, I will not make my stand on him ; I am not so clear that, as a lyric poet, Petrarch may not rival the Greeks. Shakspeare I esteem of ineffable merit.”

“And who is Shakspeare ?” said Cadurcis. “We know of him as much as we do of Homer. Did he write half the plays attributed to him ? Did he ever write a single whole play ? I doubt it. He appears to me to have been an inspired adapter for the theatres, which were then not as good as barns. I take him to have been a botcher up of old plays. His popularity is of modern date, and it may not last ; it would have surprised him marvelously. Heaven knows, at present, all that bears his name is alike admired, and a regular Shakspearian falls into ecstasies with trash which deserves a niche in the Dunciad. For my part, I abhor your irregular geniuses, and I love to listen to the little nightingale of Twickenham.”

“I have often observed,” said Herbert, “that writers of a very unbridled imagination themselves, admire those whom the world erroneously, in my opinion, and from a confusion of ideas, esteems correct. I am myself an admirer of Pope, though I certainly should not ever think of classing him among the great creative spirits. And you, you are the last poet in the world, Cadurcis, whom one would have fancied his votary.”

“I have written like a boy,” said Cadurcis. “I found the public bite, and so I baited on with tainted meat. I have never written for fame, only for notoriety ; but I am satiated ; I am going to turn over a new leaf.”

“For myself,” said Herbert, “if I ever had the power to impress my creations on my fellow men, the inclination is gone, and perhaps the faculty is extinct. My career is over ; perhaps a solitary echo from my lyre may yet, at times, linger about the world like a breeze that has lost its way. But there is a radical fault in my poetic mind, and I am conscious of it. I am not altogether void of the creative faculty, but mine is a fragmentary mind ; I produce no whole. Unless you do this, you cannot last ; at least, you cannot materially affect your species. But what I admire in you, Cadurcis, is that, with all the faults of youth, of which you will free yourself, your creative power is vigorous, prolific, and complete : your creations rise fast and fair, like perfect worlds.”

“Well, we will not compliment each other,” said Cadurcis ; “for, after all, it is a miserable craft. What is poetry but a lie, and what are poets but liars ?”

"You are wrong, Cadurcis," said Herbert; "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

"I see the towers of Porto Venere," said Cadurcis, directing the sail; "we shall soon be on shore. I think, too, I recognise Venetia. Ah! my dear Herbert, your daughter is a poem that beats all our inspiration!"

CHAPTER IX.

ONE circumstance alone cast a gloom over this happy family, and that was the approaching departure of Captain Cadurcis for England. This had been often postponed, but it could be postponed no longer. Not even the entreaties of those kind friends could any longer prevent what was inevitable. The kind heart, the sweet temper, and the lively and companionable qualities of Captain Cadurcis, had endeared him to every one; all felt that his departure would occasion a blank in their life, impossible to be supplied. It reminded the Herberts also painfully of their own situation, in regard to their native country, which they were ever unwilling to dwell upon. George talked of returning to them, but the prospect was necessarily vague; they felt that it was only one of those fanciful visions with which an affectionate spirit attempts to soothe the pang of separation. His position, his duties, all the projects of his life, bound him to England, from which, indeed, he had been too long absent. It was selfish to wish that, for their sakes, he should sink down into a mere idler in Italy; and yet, when they recollected how little his future life could be connected with their own, every one felt dispirited.

"I shall not go boating to-day," said George to Venetia; "it is my last day. Mr. Herbert and Plantagenet talk of going to Lavenza; let us take a stroll together."

Nothing can be refused to those we love on the last day, and Venetia immediately acceded to his request. In the course of the morning, therefore, herself and George quitted the valley, in the direction of the coast towards Genoa. Many a white sail glittered on the blue waters; it was a lively and cheering scene; but both Venetia and her companion were depressed.

"I ought to be happy," said George, and sighed. "The fondest wish of my heart is attained. You remember our conversation on the Lago Maggiore, Venetia? You see I was a prophet, and you will be Lady Cadurcis yet."

"We must keep up our spirits," said Venetia; "I do not despair of our all returning to England yet. So many wonders have happened, that I cannot persuade myself that this marvel will not also occur. I am sure my uncle will do something; I

have a secret idea that the Bishop is all this time working for papa ; I feel assured I shall see Cherbury and Cadurcis again, and Cadurcis will be your home."

"A year ago you appeared dying, and Plantagenet was the most miserable of men," said Captain Cadurcis. "You are both now perfectly well and perfectly happy, living even under the same roof, soon, I feel, to be united, and with the cordial approbation of Lady Annabel. Your father is restored to you. Every blessing in the world seems to cluster round your roof. It is selfish for me to wear a gloomy countenance."

"Ah ! dear George, you never can be selfish," said Venetia.

"Yes, I am selfish, Venetia. What else can make me sad ?"

"You know how much you contribute to our happiness," said Venetia, "and you feel for our sufferings at your absence."

"No, Venetia, I feel for myself," said Captain Cadurcis with energy ; "I am certain that I never can be happy, except in your society and Plantagenet's. I cannot express to you how I love you both. Nothing else gives me the slightest interest."

"You must go home and marry," said Venetia smiling. "You must marry an heiress."

"Never," said Captain Cadurcis. "Nothing shall ever induce me to marry. No ! all my dreams are confined to being the bachelor uncle of the family."

"Well now, I think," said Venetia, "of all the persons I know, there is no one so qualified for domestic happiness as yourself. I think your wife, George, would be a very fortunate woman, and I only wish I had a sister, that you might marry her."

"I wish you had, Venetia ; I would give up my resolution against marriage directly."

"Alas !" said Venetia, "there is always some bitter drop in the cup of life. Must you indeed go, George ?"

"My present departure is inevitable," he replied ; "but I have some thoughts of giving up my profession and Parliament, and then I will return, never to leave you again."

"What will Lord —— say ? That will never do," said Venetia. "No ; I should not be content unless you prospered in the world, George. You are made to prosper, and I should be miserable if you sacrificed your existence to us. You must go home, and you must marry, and write letters to us by every post, and tell us what a happy man you are. The best thing for you to do, would be to live with your wife at the abbey ; or Cherbury, if you liked. You see I settle everything."

"I never will marry," said Captain Cadurcis, seriously.

"Yes you will," said Venetia.

"I am quite serious, Venetia. Now, mark my words, and

remember this day. I never will marry. I have a reason, and a strong and good one, for my resolution."

"What is it?"

"Because my marriage will destroy the intimacy that subsists between me and yourself—and Plantagenet," he added.

"Your wife should be my friend," said Venetia.

"Happy woman!" said George.

"Let me indulge for a moment in a dream of domestic bliss," said Venetia gaily. "Papa and mamma at Cherbury; Plantagenet and myself at the abbey, where you and your wife must remain until we could build you a house; and Dr. Masham coming down to spend Christmas with us. Would it not be delightful? I only hope Plantagenet would be tame. I think he would burst out a little sometimes."

"Not with you, Venetia, not with you," said George; "you have a hold over him which nothing can ever shake. I could always put him in an amiable mood in an instant by mentioning your name."

"I wish you knew the abbey, George," said Venetia. "It is the most interesting of all old places. I love it. You must promise me when you arrive in England to go on a pilgrimage to Cadurcis and Cherbury, and write me a long account of it."

"I will indeed; I will write to you very often."

"You shall find me a most faithful correspondent, which I dare say Plantagenet would not prove."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," said George, "you have no idea of the quantity of letters he wrote me when he first quitted England. And such delightful ones! I do not think there is a more lively letter-writer in the world! His descriptions are so vivid; a few touches give you a complete picture; and then his observations, they are so playful! I assure you there is nothing in the world more easy and diverting than a letter from Plantagenet."

"If you could only see his first letter from Eton to me!" said Venetia. "I have always treasured it. It certainly was not very diverting; and if by easy you mean easy to decipher," she added laughing, "his handwriting must have improved very much lately. Dear Plantagenet, I am always afraid I never pay him sufficient respect; that I do not feel sufficient awe in his presence; but I cannot disconnect him from the playfellow of my infancy: and do you know it seems to me, whenever he addresses me, his voice and air change, and assume quite the tone and manner of childhood."

"I have never known him but as a great man," said Captain Cadurcis, "but he was so frank and simple with me from the very first, that I cannot believe that it is not two years since we first met."

"Ah! I shall never forget that night at Ranelagh, said Venetia, half with a smile and half with a sigh. "How interesting he looked! I loved to see the people stare at him, and to hear them whisper his name."

Here they seated themselves by a fountain, overshadowed by a plane-tree, and for a while talked only of Plantagenet.

"All the dreams of my life have come to pass," said Venetia. "I remember when I was at Weymouth, ill and not very happy, I used to roam about the sands, thinking of papa, and how I wished Plantagenet was like him, a great man, a great poet, whom all the world admired. Little did I think that before a year had passed, Plantagenet, my unknown Plantagenet, would be the admiration of England; little did I think another year would pass, and I should be living with my father and Plantagenet together, and they should be bosom friends. You see, George, we must never despair."

"Under this bright sun," said Captain Cadurcis, "one is naturally sanguine, but think of me alone and in gloomy England."

"It is indeed a bright sun," said Venetia; "how wonderful to wake every morning and be sure of meeting its beam!"

Captain Cadurcis looked around him with a sailor's eye. Over the Apennines towards Genoa, there was a ridge of dark clouds piled up with such compactness, that they might have been mistaken in a hasty survey for part of the mountains themselves.

"Bright as is the sun," said Captain Cadurcis, "we may have yet a squall before night."

"I was delighted with Venice," said his companion, not noticing his observation; "I think of all places in the world it is one which Plantagenet would most admire. I cannot believe but that even his delicious Athens would yield to it."

"He did lead the oddest life at Athens you can conceive," said Captain Cadurcis. "The people did not know what to make of him. He lived in the Latin Convent, a fine building which he had almost to himself, for there are not half a dozen monks. He used to pace up and down the terrace which he had turned into a garden, and on which he kept all sorts of strange animals. He wrote continually there. Indeed he did nothing but write. His only relaxation was a daily ride to Piræus, about five miles over the plain; he told me it was the only time in his life he was ever contented with himself except when he was at Cherbury. He always spoke of London with disgust."

"Plantagenet loves retirement and a quiet life," said Venetia; "but he must not be marred with vulgar sights, and common-place duties. That is the secret with him."

"I think the wind has just changed," said Captain Cadurcis.

It seems to me that we shall have a sirocco. There, it shifts again! We shall have a sirocco for certain."

"What did you think of papa when you first saw him?" said Venetia. "Was he the kind of person you expected to see?"

"Exactly," said Captain Cadurcis. "So very spiritual! Plantagenet said to me, as we went home the first night, that he looked like a golden phantom. I think him very like you, Venetia; indeed there can be no doubt you inherited your face from your father."

"Ah! if you had seen his portrait at Cherbury, when he was only twenty!" said Venetia. "That was a golden phantom, or rather he looked like Hyperion. What are you staring at so, George?"

"I do not like this wind," muttered Captain Cadurcis. "There it goes."

"You cannot see the wind, George?"

"Yes, I can, Venetia, and I do not like it at all. Do you see that black spot flitting like a shade over the sea? It is like the reflection of a cloud on the water; but there is no cloud. Well, that is the wind, Venetia, and a very wicked wind too."

"How strange! Is that indeed the wind?"

"We had better return home," said Captain Cadurcis. "I wish they had not gone to Lavenza."

"But there is no danger?" said Venetia.

"Danger? No! no danger, but they may get a wet jacket."

They walked on; but Captain Cadurcis was rather distraught: his eye was always watching the wind; at last he said, "I tell you, Venetia, we must walk quickly; for, by Jove, we are going to have a white squall."

They hurried their pace, Venetia mentioned her alarm again about the boat, but her companion reassured her: yet his manner was not so confident as his words.

A white mist began to curl above the horizon, the blueness of the day seemed suddenly to fade, and its colour became grey; there was a swell on the waters that hitherto had been quite glassy, and they were covered with a scurfy foam.

"I wish I had been with them," said Captain Cadurcis, evidently very anxious.

"George, you are alarmed," said Venetia, earnestly. "I am sure there is danger."

"Danger! How can there be danger, Venetia? Perhaps they are in port by this time. I dare say we shall find them at Spezzia. I will see you home and run down to them. Only hurry, for your own sake, for you do not know what a white squall in the Mediterranean is. We have but a few moments."

And even at this very instant, the wind came roaring and rushing with such a violent gush that Venetia could scarcely stand ; George put his arm round her to support her. The air was filled with thick white vapour, so that they could no longer see the ocean, only the surf rising very high all along the coast.

"Keep close to me, Venetia," said Captain Cadurcis ; "hold my arm and I will walk first, for we shall not be able to see a yard before us in a minute. I know where we are. We are above the olive wood, and we shall soon be in the ravine. These Mediterranean white squalls are nasty things ; I had sooner by half be in a south-wester ; for one cannot run before the wind in this bay, the reefs stretch such a long way out."

The danger, and the inutility of expressing fears which could only perplex her guide, made Venetia silent, but she was terrified. She could not divest herself of apprehension about her father and Plantagenet. In spite of all he said, it was evident that her companion was alarmed.

They had now entered the valley : the mountains had in some degree kept off the vapour ; the air was more clear. Venetia and Captain Cadurcis stopped a moment to breathe. "Now, Venetia, you are safe," said Captain Cadurcis. "I will not come in ; I will run down to the bay at once." He wiped the mist off his face : Venetia perceived him deadly pale.

"George," she said, "conceal nothing from me ; there is danger, imminent danger. Tell me at once."

"Indeed, Venetia," said Captain Cadurcis, "I am sure everything will be quite right. There is some danger, certainly, at this moment, but of course, long ago, they have run into harbour. I have no doubt they are at Spezzia at this moment. Now, do not be alarmed : indeed there is no cause. God bless you !" he said, and bounded away. "No cause," thought he to himself, as the wind sounded like thunder, and the vapour came rushing up the ravine. "God grant I may be right : but neither between the Tropics nor on the Line have I witnessed a severer squall than this ! What open boat can live in this weather ! Oh ! that I had been with them ! I shall never forgive myself !"

CHAPTER X.

VENETIA found her mother walking up and down the room, as was her custom when she was agitated. She hurried to her daughter. "You must change your dress instantly, Venetia," said Lady Anabel. "Where is George ?"

"He has gone down to Spezzia to papa and Plantagenet ; it is

a white squall; it comes on very suddenly in this sea. He ran down to Spezzia instantly, because he thought they would be wet," said the agitated Venetia, speaking with rapidity and trying to appear calm.

"Are they at Spezzia?" inquired Lady Annabel quickly.

"George has no doubt they are, mother," said Venetia.

"No doubt!" exclaimed Lady Annabel, in great distress: "God grant they may be only wet."

"Dearest mother," said Venetia, approaching her, but speech deserted her. She had advanced to encourage Lady Annabel, but her own fear checked the words on her lips.

"Change your dress, Venetia," said Lady Annabel; "lose no time in doing that. I think I will send down to Spezzia at once."

"That is useless now, dear mother, for George is there."

"Go, dearest," said Lady Annabel; "I dare say, we have no cause for fear, but I am exceedingly alarmed about your father, about them: I am, indeed. I do not like these sudden squalls, and I never liked this boating; indeed, I never did. George being with them reconciled me to it. Now go, Venetia, go, my love."

Venetia quitted the room. She was so agitated that she made Pauncefort a confidant of her apprehensions.

"La! my dear miss," said Mistress Pauncefort, "I should never have thought of such a thing! Do not you remember what the old man said at Weymouth, 'there is many a boat will live in a rougher sea than a ship;' and it is such an unlikely thing, it is indeed, Miss Venetia. I am certain sure my lord can manage a boat as well as a common sailor, and master is hardly less used to it than he. La! miss, don't make yourself nervous about any such preposterous ideas. And I dare say you will find them in the saloon when you go down again. Really I should not wonder. I think you had better wear your twill dress; I have put the new trimming on."

They had not returned when Venetia joined her mother. That indeed she could scarcely expect. But in about half an hour, a message arrived from Captain Cadurcis that they were not at Spezzia, but from something he had heard, he had no doubt they were at Sarzana, and he was going to ride on there at once. He felt sure, however, from what he had heard they were at Sarzana. This communication afforded Lady Annabel a little ease, but Venetia's heart misgave her. She recalled the alarm of George in the morning which it was impossible for him to disguise, and she thought she recognised in this hurried message and vague assur-

ances of safety something of the same apprehension, and the same fruitless efforts to conceal it.

Now came the time of terrible suspense. Sarzana was nearly twenty miles distant from Spezzia. The evening must arrive before they could receive intelligence from Captain Cadurcis. In the mean time the squall died away ; the heavens became again bright, and though the waves were still tumultuous the surf was greatly decreased. Lady Annabel had already sent down more than one messenger to the bay, but they brought no intelligence—she resolved now to go herself, that she might have the satisfaction of herself cross-examining the fishermen who had been driven in from various parts by stress of weather. She would not let Venetia accompany her, who, she feared, might already suffer from the exertions and rough weather of the morning. This was a most anxious hour, and yet the absence of her mother was in some degree a relief to Venetia ; it at least freed her from the perpetual effort of assumed composure. While her mother remained, Venetia had affected to read, though her eye wandered listlessly over the page, or to draw, though the pencil trembled in her hand ; anything which might guard her from conveying to her mother that she shared the apprehensions which had already darkened her mother's mind. But now that Lady Annabel was gone, Venetia, muffling herself up in her shawl, threw herself on a sofa, and there she remained without a thought, her mind a chaos of terrible images.

Her mother returned, and with a radiant countenance. Venetia sprang from the sofa. "There is good news ; O mother ! have they returned ?"

"They are not at Spezzia," said Lady Annabel, throwing herself into a chair panting for breath ; "but there is good news. You see I was right to go, Venetia. These stupid people we send only ask questions, and take the first answer. I have seen a fisherman, and he says he heard that two persons, Englishmen he believes, have put into Lerici in an open boat."

"God be praised !" said Venetia. "O mother, I can now confess to you the terror I have all along felt."

"My own heart assures me of it, my child," said Lady Annabel weeping ; and they mingled their tears together, but tears not of sorrow.

"Poor George !" said Lady Annabel, "he will have a terrible journey to Sarzana, and be feeling so much for us ! Perhaps he may meet them."

"I feel assured he will," said Venetia ; "and perhaps ere long they will all three be here again. Joy ! joy !"

"They must never go in that boat again," said Lady Annabel.

"O! they never will, dearest mother, if you ask them not," said Venetia.

"We will send to Lerici," said Lady Annabel.

"Instantly," said Venetia; "but I dare say they have already sent us a messenger."

"No!" said Lady Annabel; "men treat the danger that is past very lightly. We shall not hear from them except in person."

Time now flew more lightly. They were both easy in their minds. The messenger was despatched to Lerici; but even Lerici was a considerable distance, and hours must elapse before his return. Still there was the hope of seeing them, or hearing from them in the interval.

"I must go out, dear mother," said Venetia. "Let us both go out. It is now very fine. Let us go just to the Ravine, for indeed it is impossible to remain here."

Accordingly they both went forth, and took up a position on the coast which commanded a view on all sides. All was radiant again, and comparatively calm. Venetia looked upon the sea, and said, "Ah! I never shall forget a white squall in the Mediterranean, for all this splendour."

It was sunset: they returned home. No news yet from Lerici. Lady Annabel grew uneasy again. The pensive and melancholy hour encouraged gloom; but Venetia, who was sanguine, encouraged her mother.

"Suppose they were not Englishmen in the boat," said Lady Annabel.

"It is impossible, mother. What other two persons in this neighbourhood could have been in an open boat? Besides, the man said Englishmen. You remember, he said Englishmen. You are quite sure he did? It must be they. I feel as convinced of it as of your presence."

"I think there can be no doubt," said Lady Annabel. "I wish that the messenger would return."

The messenger did return. No two persons in an open boat had put into Lerici; but a boat, like the one described, with every stitch of canvass set, had passed Lerici just before the squall commenced, and, the people there doubted not, had made Sarzana.

Lady Annabel turned pale, but Venetia was still sanguine. "They are at Sarzana," she said; "they must be at Sarzana; you see George was right. He said he was sure they were at Sarzana. Besides, dear mother, he heard they were at Sarzana."

"And we heard they were at Lerici," said Lady Annabel in a melancholy tone.

"And so they were, dear mother; it all agrees. The accounts

are very consistent. Do not you see how very consistent they are? They were seen at Lerici, and were off Lerici, but they made Sarzana; and George heard they were at Sarzana. I am certain they are at Sarzana. I feel quite easy; I feel as easy as if they were here. They are safe at Sarzana. But it is too far to return to-night. We shall see them at breakfast to-morrow, —all three."

"Venetia, dearest! do not you sit up," said her mother. "I think there is a chance of George returning; I feel assured he will send to-night; but late, of course. Go, dearest, and sleep."

"Sleep!" thought Venetia to herself; but to please her mother she retired.

"Good night, my child," said Lady Annabel. "The moment any one arrives, you shall be aroused."

CHAPTER XI.

VENETIA, without undressing, lay down on her bed, watching for some sound that might give her hope of George's return. Dwelling on every instant, the time dragged heavily along, and she thought that the night had half passed when Pouncefort entered her room, and she learnt, to her surprise, that only an hour had elapsed since she had parted from her mother. This entrance of Pouncefort had given Venetia a momentary hope that they had returned.

"I assure you, Miss Venetia, it is only an hour," said Pouncefort, "and nothing could have happened. Now do try to go to sleep, that is a dear young lady, for I am certain sure that they will all return in the morning as I am here. I was telling my lady just now, I said, says I, I dare say they are all very wet, and very fatigued."

"They would have returned, Pouncefort," said Venetia, "or they would have sent. They are not at Sarzana."

"La! Miss Venetia, why should they be at Sarzana? Why should they not have gone much farther on! For, as Vincenzo was just saying to me, and Vincenzo knows all about the coast, with such a wind as this, I should not be surprised if they were at Leghorn."

"Oh! Pouncefort," said Venetia, "I am sick at heart!"

"Now really, Miss Venetia, do not take on so!" said Pouncefort; "for do not you remember when his lordship ran away from the abbey, and went a gipsying, nothing would persuade poor Mrs. Cadureis that he was not robbed and murdered, and yet you

see he was as safe and sound all the time, as if he had been at Cherbury."

"Does Vincenzo really think they could have reached Leghorn?" said Venetia, clinging to every fragment of hope.

"He is morally sure of it, Miss Venetia," said Pouncefort, "and I feel quite as certain, for Vincenzo is always right."

"I had confidence about Sarzana," said Venetia; "I really did believe they were at Sarzana. If only Captain Cadurcis would return; if he only would return, and say they were not at Sarzana, I would try to believe they were at Leghorn."

"Now, Miss Venetia," said Pouncefort, "I am certain sure that they are quite safe; for my lord is a very good sailor; he is, indeed; all the men say so; and the boat is as seaworthy a boat as boat can be. There is not the slightest fear, I do assure you, Miss."

"Do the men say that Plantagenet is a good sailor?" inquired Venetia.

"Quite professional!" said Mistress Pouncefort; "and can command a ship as well as the best of them. They all say that."

"Hush! Pouncefort, I hear something."

"It's only my lady, Miss. I know her step."

"Is my mother going to bed?" said Venetia.

"Yes," said Pouncefort, "my lady sent me here to see after you. I wish I could tell her you were asleep."

"It is impossible to sleep," said Venetia, rising up from the bed, withdrawing the curtain, and looking at the sky. "What a peaceful night! I wish my heart were like the sky. I think I will go to mamma, Pouncefort!"

"Oh! dear, Miss Venetia, I am sure I think you had better not. If you and my lady, now, would only just go to sleep, and forget everything till morning, it would be much better for you. Besides, I am sure if my lady knew you were not gone to bed already, it would only make her doubly anxious. Now, really, Miss Venetia, do take my advice, and just lie down again. You may be sure the moment any one arrives I will let you know. Indeed, I shall go and tell my lady that you are lying down, as it is, and very drowsy;" and, so saying, Mistress Pouncefort caught up her candle, and bustled out of the room.

Venetia took up the volume of her father's poems, which Cadurcis had filled with his notes. How little did Plantagenet anticipate, when he thus expressed at Athens the passing impressions of his mind, that ere a year had glided away, his fate would be so intimately blended with that of Herbert! It was impossible, however, for Venetia to lose herself in a volume which under any other circumstances might have compelled her spirit; the very

associations with the writers added to the terrible restlessness of her mind. She paused each instant to listen for the wished-for sound, but a mute stillness reigned throughout the house and household. There was something in this deep, unbroken silence, at a moment when anxiety was universally diffused among the dwellers beneath that roof, and the heart of more than one of them was throbbing with all the torture of the most awful suspense, that fell upon Venetia's excited nerves with a very painful and even insufferable influence. She longed for sound—for some noise that might assure her she was not the victim of a trance. She closed her volume with energy, and she started at the sound she had herself created. She rose and opened the door of her chamber very softly, and walked into the vestibule. There were caps, and cloaks, and whips, and canes of Cadurcis and her father, lying about in familiar confusion. It seemed impossible but that they were sleeping, as usual, under the same roof. And where were they? That she should live and be unable to answer that terrible question! When she felt the utter helplessness of all her strong sympathy towards them, it seemed to her that she must go mad. She gazed around her with a wild and vacant stare. At the bottom of her heart there was a fear maturing into conviction too horrible for expression. She returned to her own chamber, and the exhaustion occasioned by her anxiety, and the increased coolness of the night, made her at length drowsy. She threw herself on the bed, and slumbered.

She started in her sleep—she awoke—she dreamed they had come home. She rose and looked at the progress of the night. The night was waning fast; a grey light was on the landscape; the point of day approached. Venetia stole softly to her mother's room, and entered it with a soundless step. Lady Annabel had not retired to bed. She had sat up the whole night, and was now asleep. A lamp on a small table was burning at her side, and she held, firmly grasped in her hand, the letter of her husband, which he had addressed to her at Venice, and which she had been evidently reading. A tear glided down the cheek of Venetia as she watched her mother retaining that letter with fondness even in her sleep, and when she thought of all the misery, and heart-aches, and harrowing hours that had preceded its receipt, and which Venetia believed that letter had cured for ever. What misery awaited them now? Why were they watchers of the night? She shuddered when these dreadful questions flitted through her mind. She shuddered and sighed. Her mother started, and woke.

“Who is there?” inquired Lady Annabel.

“Venetia.”

"My child, have you not slept?"

"Yes, mother, and I woke refreshed, as I hope you do."

"I wake with trust in God's mercy," said Lady Annabel. "Tell me the hour?"

"It is just upon dawn, mother."

"Dawn! no one has returned, or come?"

"The house is still, mother."

"I would you were in bed, my child."

"Mother, I can sleep no more. I wish to be with you;"—and Venetia seated herself at her mother's feet, and reclined her head upon her mother's knee.

"I am glad the night has passed, Venetia," said Lady Annabel, in a suppressed yet solemn tone. "It has been a trial." And here she placed the letter in her bosom. Venetia could only answer with a sigh.

"I wish Pouncefort would come," said Lady Annabel; "and yet I do not like to rouse her, she was up so late, poor creature! If it be the dawn I should like to send out messengers again; something may be heard at Spezzia."

"Vicenzo thinks they have gone to Leghorn, mother."

"Has he heard anything?" said Lady Annabel, eagerly.

"No, but he is an excellent judge," said Venetia, repeating all Pouncefort's consolatory chatter; "he knows the coast so well. He says he is sure the wind would carry them on to Leghorn; and that accounts, you know, mother, for George not returning. They are all at Leghorn."

"Would that George would return," murmured Lady Annabel; "I wish I could see again that sailor who said they were at Lerici. He was an intelligent man."

"Perhaps if we send down to the bay he may be there," said Venetia.

"Hush! I hear a step!" said Lady Annabel.

Venetia sprung up and opened the door, but it was only Pouncefort in the vestibule.

"The household are all up, my lady," said that important personage entering; "'tis a beautiful morning. Vicenzo has run down to the bay, my lady; I sent him off immediately. Vicenzo says he is certain sure they are at Leghorn, my lady—and this time three years, the very same thing happened. They were fishing for anchovies, my lady, close by, my lady, near Sarzana—two young men, or rather one about the same age as master, and one like my lord—cousins, my lady, and just in the same sort of boat, my lady; and there came on a squall, just the same sort of squall, my lady, and they did not return home; and every one was frightened out of their wits, my lady, and

their wives and families quite distracted—and after all they were at Leghorn; for this sort of wind always takes your open boats to Leghorn, Vincenzo says.”

The sun rose, the household were all stirring, and many of them abroad; the common routine of domestic duty seemed, by some general yet not expressed understanding, to have ceased. The ladies descended below at a very early hour, and went forth into the valley, once the happy valley. What was to be its future denomination? Vincenzo returned from the bay, and he contrived to return with cheering intelligence. The master of a felucca who, in consequence of the squall had put in at Lerici, and in the evening dropped down to Spezzia, had met an open boat an hour before he reached Sarzana, and was quite confident that if it had put into port, it must have been, from the speed at which it was going, a great distance down the coast. No wrecks had been heard of in the neighbourhood. This intelligence, the gladsome time of day, and the non-arrival of Captain Cadurcis, which according to their mood was always a circumstance that counted either for good or for evil, and the sanguine feelings which make us always cling to hope, altogether reassured our friends; Venetia dismissed from her mind the dark thought which for a moment had haunted her in the noon of night; and still it was a suspense, a painful agitating suspense, but only suspense that yet influenced them.

“Time!” said Lady Annabel. “Time! we must wait.”

Venetia consoled her mother; she affected even a gaiety of spirit; she was sure that Vincenzo would turn out to be right, after all; Pauncefort said he always was right, and that they were at Leghorn.

The day wore apace; the noon arrived and passed; it was even approaching sunset. Lady Annabel was almost afraid to counter-order the usual meals, lest Venetia should comprehend her secret terror; the very same sentiment influenced Venetia. Thus they both had submitted to the ceremony of breakfast, but when the hour of dinner approached they could neither endure the mockery. They looked at each other, and almost at the same time they proposed that, instead of dining, they should walk down to the bay.

“I trust we shall at least hear something before the night,” said Lady Annabel. “I confess I dread the coming night. I do not think I could endure it.”

“The longer we do not hear, the more certain I am of their being at Leghorn,” said Venetia.

“I have a great mind to travel there to-night,” said Lady Annabel.

As they were stepping into the portico, Venetia recognised Captain Cadurcis in the distance. She turned pale ; she would have fallen had she not leaned on her mother, who was not so advanced, and who had not seen him.

"What is the matter, Venetia?" said Lady Annabel, alarmed.

"He is here, he is here!"

"Marmion?"

"No, George. Let me sit down."

Her mother tried to support her to a chair. Lady Annabel took off her bonnet. She had not strength to walk forth. She could not speak. She sat down opposite Venetia, and her countenance pictured distress to so painful a degree, that at any other time Venetia would have flown to her, but in this crisis of suspense it was impossible. George was in sight ; he was in the portico ; he was in the room.

He looked wan, haggard, and distracted. More than once he essayed to speak, but failed.

Lady Annabel looked at him with a strange, delirious expression. Venetia rushed forward and seized his arm, and gazed intently on his face. He shrank from her glance ; his frame trembled.

CHAPTER XII.

In the heart of the tempest Captain Cadurcis traced his way in a sea of vapour with extreme danger and difficulty to the shore. On his arrival at Spezzia, however, scarcely a house was visible, and the only evidence of the situation of the place was the cessation of an immense white surf which otherwise indicated the line of the sea, but the absence of which proved his contiguity to a harbour. In the thick fog he heard the cries and shouts of the returning fishermen, and of their wives and children responding from the land to their exclamations. He was forced, therefore, to wait at Spezzia in an agony of impotent suspense until the fury of the storm was over and the sky was partially cleared. At length the objects became gradually less obscure ; he could trace the outline of the houses, and catch a glimpse of the water half a mile out, and soon the old castles which guard the entrance of the strait that leads into the gulf, looming in the distance, and now and then a group of human beings in the vanishing vapour. Of these he made some inquiries, but in vain, respecting the boat and his friends. He then made the brig, but could learn nothing except their departure in the morning. He at length obtained a horse and galloped along the coast towards Lerici, keeping a sharp look out as he proceeded, and stopping at every village in his pro-

gress for intelligence. When he had arrived in the course of three hours at Lerici, the storm had abated, the sky was clear, and no evidence of the recent squall remained except the agitated state of the waves. At Lerici he could hear nothing, so he hurried on to Sarzana, where he learnt for the first time that an open boat, with its sails set, had passed more than an hour before the squall commenced. From Sarzana he hastened on to Lavenza, a little port, the nearest sea-point to Massa, and where the Carrara marble is shipped for England. Here also his inquiries were fruitless, and, exhausted by his exertions, he dismounted and rested at the inn, not only for repose, but to consider over the course which he should now pursue. The boat had not been seen off Lavenza, and the idea that they had made the coast towards Leghorn now occurred to him. His horse was so wearied that he was obliged to stop some time at Lavenza, for he could procure no other mode of conveyance; the night also was fast coming on, and to proceed to Leghorn by this dangerous route at this hour was impossible. At Lavenza therefore he remained, resolved to hasten to Leghorn at break of day. This was a most awful night. Although physically exhausted, Captain Cadurcis could not sleep, and after some vain efforts, he quitted his restless bed on which he had laid down without undressing, and walked forth to the harbour. Between anxiety for Herbert and his cousin, and for the unhappy women whom he had left behind, he was nearly distracted. He gazed on the sea, as if some sail in sight might give him a chance of hope. His professional experience assured him of all the danger of the squall. He could not conceive how an open boat could live in such a sea, and an instant return to port so soon as the squall commenced, appeared the only chance of its salvation. Could they have reached Leghorn? It seemed impossible. There was no hope they could now be at Sarzana, or Lerici. When he contemplated the full contingency of what might have occurred his mind wandered and refused to comprehend the possibility of the terrible conclusion. He thought the morning would never break.

There was a cavernous rock by the sea-shore, that jutted into the water like a small craggy promontory. Captain Cadurcis climbed to its top, and then descending, reclined himself upon an inferior portion of it, which formed a natural couch with the wave on each side. There, lying at his length, he gazed upon the moon and stars whose brightness he thought would never dim. The Mediterranean is a tideless sea, but the swell of the waves, which still set in to the shore, bore occasionally masses of sea-weed and other marine formations, and deposited them around him, plashing, as it broke against the shore, with a melancholy and monotonous sound. The abstraction of the scene, the hour, and the surrounding cir-

circumstances, brought, however, no refreshment to the exhausted spirit of George Cadurcis. He could not think, indeed he did not dare to think; but the villa of the Apennines and the open boat in the squall flitted continually before him. His mind was feeble, though excited, and he fell into a restless and yet unmeaning reverie. As long as he had been in action, as long as he had been hurrying along the coast, the excitement of motion, the constant exercise of his senses, had relieved or distracted the intolerable suspense. But this pause—this inevitable pause overwhelmed him. It oppressed his spirit, like eternity. And yet what might the morning bring? He almost wished that he might remain for ever on this rock, watching the moon and stars, and that the life of the world might never recommence.

He started, he had fallen into a light slumber, he had been dreaming, he thought he had heard the voice of Venetia calling him; he had forgotten where he was; he stared at the sea and sky, and recalled his dreadful consciousness. The wave broke with a heavy plash that attracted his attention; it was, indeed, that sound that had awakened him. He looked around; there was some object; he started wildly from his resting-place, sprang over the cavern, and bounded on the beach. It was a corpse; he is kneeling by its side. It is the corpse of his cousin! Lord Cadurcis was a fine swimmer, and had evidently made strong efforts for his life, for he was partly undressed. In all the insanity of hope, still wilder than despair, George Cadurcis seized the body and bore it some yards upon the shore. Life had been long extinct. The corpse was cold and stark, the eyes closed, an expression of energy, however, yet lingering in the fixed jaw, and the hair sodden with the sea. Suddenly Captain Cadurcis rushed to the inn and roused the household. With a distracted air, and broken speech and rapid motion, he communicated the catastrophe. Several persons, some bearing torches, others blankets and cordials, followed him instantly to the fatal spot. They hurried to the body, they applied all the rude remedies of the moment, rather from the impulse of nervous excitement than with any practical purpose; for the case had been indeed long hopeless. While Captain Cadurcis leant over the body, chafing the extremities in a hurried frenzy, and gazing intently on the countenance, a shout was heard from one of the stragglers, who had recently arrived. The sea had washed on the beach another corpse: the form of Marmion Herbert! It would appear that he had made no struggle to save himself, for his hand was locked in his waistcoat, where, at the moment, he had thrust the Phædo, showing that he had been reading to the last, and was meditating on immortality when he died.

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER I.

It was the commencement of autumn. The verdure of summer still lingered on the trees, the sky if not so cloudless was almost as refulgent as Italy; and the pigeons, bright and glancing, clustered on the roof of the hall of Cherbury. The steward was in attendance; the household, all in deep mourning, were assembled; everything was in readiness for the immediate arrival of Lady Annabel Herbert.

"'Tis nearly four years come Martinmas," said the grey-headed butler, "since my Lady left us."

"And no good has come of it," said the housekeeper. "And for my part I never heard of good coming from going to foreign parts."

"I shall like to see Miss Venetia again," said a housemaid. "Bless her sweet face!"

"I never expected to see her Miss Venetia again from all we heard," said a footman.

"God's will be done!" said the grey-headed butler, "but I hope she will find happiness at home. 'Tis nigh on twenty years since I first nursed her in these arms."

"I wonder if there is any new Lord Cadurcis," said the footman. "I think he was the last of the line."

"It would have been a happy day if I had lived to have seen the poor young Lord marry Miss Venetia," said the housekeeper. "I always thought that match was made in heaven."

"He was a sweet-spoken young gentleman," said the housemaid.

"For my part," said the footman, "I should like to have seen our real master, Squire Herbert. He was a famous gentleman by all accounts."

"I wish they had lived quietly at home," said the housekeeper.

"I shall never forget the time when my Lord returned," said the grey-headed butler. "I must say I thought it was a match."

"Mistress Pauncefort seemed to think so," said the housemaid.

"And she understands those things," said the footman.

"I see the carriage," said a servant who was at a window in the hall. All immediately bustled about, and the housekeeper sent a message to the steward.

The carriage might be just discovered at the end of the avenue. It was some time before it entered the iron gates that were thrown open for its reception. The steward stood on the steps with his hat off, the servants were ranged in order at the entrance. Touching

their horses with the spur, and cracking their whips, the postilions dashed round the circular plot and stopped at the hall-door. Under any circumstances a return home after an interval of years is rather an awful moment ; there was not a servant who was not visibly affected. On the outside of the carriage was a foreign servant and Mistress Pauncefort, who was not so profuse as might have been expected in her recognitions of her old friends ; her countenance was graver than of yore. Misfortune and misery had subdued even Mistress Pauncefort. The foreign servant opened the door of the carriage ; a young man, who was a stranger to the household, but who was in deep mourning, alighted, and then Lady Annabel appeared. The steward advanced to welcome her, the household bowed and curtsied. She smiled on them for a moment graciously and kindly, but her countenance immediately reassumed a serious air, and whispering one word to the strange gentleman, she entered the hall alone, inviting the steward to follow her.

"I hope your ladyship is well—welcome home, my Lady—welcome again to Cherbury—a welcome return, my Lady—hope Miss Venetia is quite well—happy to see your ladyship amongst us again, and Miss Venetia too, my Lady." Lady Annabel acknowledged these salutations with kindness, and then, saying that Miss Herbert was not very well and was fatigued with her journey, she dismissed her humble but trusty friends. Lady Annabel then turned and nodded to her fellow traveller.

Upon this Lord Cadurcis—if we must, indeed, use a title from which he himself shrank—carried a shrouded form in his arms into the hall, where the steward alone lingered, though withdrawn to the back part of the scene ; and Lady Annabel, advancing to meet him, embraced his treasured burthen—her own unhappy child.

"Now, Venetia—dearest Venetia," she said, "'tis past ; we are at home."

Venetia leant upon her mother, but made no reply.

"Up stairs, dearest," said Lady Annabel ; "a little exertion, a very little." Leaning on her mother and Lord Cadurcis, Venetia ascended the staircase, and they reached the terrace-room. Venetia looked around her as she entered the chamber,—that scene of her former life, endeared to her by so many happy hours and so many sweet incidents ; that chamber where she had first seen Plantagenet. Lord Cadurcis supported her to a chair, and then, overwhelmed by irresistible emotion, she sank back in a swoon.

No one was allowed to enter the room but Pauncefort. They revived her ; Lord Cadurcis holding her hand, and touching, with a watchful finger, her pulse. Venetia opened her eyes, and looked around her. Her mind did not wander ; she immediately recog-

nised where she was, and recollected all that had happened. She faintly smiled, and said, in a low voice, "You are all too kind, and I am very weak. After our trials, what is this? George," she added, struggling to appear animated, "you are at length at Cherbury."

Once more at Cherbury! It was, indeed, an event that recalled a thousand associations. In the wild anguish of her first grief, when the dreadful intelligence was broken to her, if any one had whispered to Venetia that she would yet find herself once more at Cherbury, she would have esteemed the intimation as mockery. But time and hope will struggle with the most poignant affliction, and their influence is irresistible and inevitable. From her darkened chamber in their Mediterranean villa, Venetia had again come forth, and crossed mountains, and traversed immense plains, and journeyed through many countries. She could not die, as she had supposed at first that she must, and therefore she had exerted herself to quit, and to quit speedily, a scene so terrible as their late abode. She was the very first to propose their return to England, and to that spot where she had passed her early life, and where she now wished to fulfil, in quiet and seclusion, the allotment of her remaining years; to meditate over the marvellous past, and cherish its sweet and bitter recollections. The native firmness of Lady Annabel, her long exercised control over her emotions, the sadness and subdued tone which the early incidents of her career had cast over her character, her profound sympathy with her daughter, and that religious consolation which never deserted her, had alike impelled and enabled her to bear up against the catastrophe with more fortitude than her child. The arrow, indeed, had struck Venetia with a double barb. She was the victim; and all the cares of Lady Annabel had been directed to soothe and support this stricken lamb. Yet perhaps these unhappy women must have sunk under their unparalleled calamities, had it not been for the devotion of their companion. In the despair of his first emotions, George Cadurcis was nearly plunging himself headlong into the wave that had already proved so fatal to his house. But when he thought of Lady Annabel and Venetia in a foreign land, without a single friend in their desolation, and pictured them to himself with the dreadful news abruptly communicated by some unfeeling stranger; and called upon, in the midst of their overwhelming agony, to attend to all the heart-rending arrangements which the discovery of the bodies of the beings to whom they were devoted, and in whom all their feelings were centred, must necessarily entail upon them—he recoiled from what he contemplated, as an act of infamous desertion. He resolved to live, if only to preserve them from all their impending troubles, and with the hope that his exertions might tend, in however slight a degree,

not to alleviate—for that was impossible—but to prevent the increase of that terrible woe, the very conception of which made his brain stagger. He carried the bodies, therefore, with him to Spezia, and then prepared for that fatal interview, the commencement of which we first indicated. Yet it must be confessed that, though the bravest of men, his courage faltered as he entered the accustomed ravine. He stopped and looked down on the precipice below; he felt it utterly impossible to meet them; his mind nearly deserted him. Death, some great and universal catastrophe, an earthquake, a deluge, that would have buried them all in an instant and a common fate, would have been hailed by George Cadurcis, at that moment, as good fortune.

He lurked about the ravine for nearly three hours before he could summon up heart for the awful interview. The position he had taken assured him that no one could approach the villa, to which he himself dared not advance. At length, in a paroxysm of energetic despair, he had rushed forward, met them instantly, and confessed with a whirling brain, and almost unconscious of his utterance, that “they could not hope to see them again in this world.”

What ensued must neither be attempted to be described, nor even remembered. It was one of those tragedies of life which enfeeble the most faithful memories at a blow, shatter nerves beyond the faculty of revival, cloud the mind for ever, or turn the hair grey in an instant. They carried Venetia delirious to her bed. The very despair, and almost madness, of her daughter, forced Lady Annabel to self-exertion, of which it was difficult to suppose that even she was capable. And George, too, was obliged to leave them. He stayed only the night. A few words passed between Lady Annabel and himself; she wished the bodies to be embalmed, and borne to England. There was no time to be lost, and there was no one to be entrusted except George. He had to hasten to Genoa to make all these preparations, and for two days he was absent from the villa. When he returned, Lady Annabel saw him, but Venetia was for a long time invisible. The moment she grew composed, she expressed a wish to her mother instantly to return to Cherbury. All the arrangements necessarily devolved upon George Cadurcis. It was his study that Lady Annabel should be troubled upon no point. The household were discharged, all the affairs were wound up, the felucca hired which was to bear them to Genoa, and in readiness, before he notified to them that the hour of departure had arrived. The most bitter circumstance was looking again upon the sea. It seemed so intolerable to Venetia, that their departure was delayed more than one day in consequence: but it was inevitable; they could reach Genoa in no

other manner. George carried Venetia in his arms to the boat, with her face covered with a shawl, and bore her in the same manner to the hotel at Genoa, where their travelling carriage awaited them.

They travelled home rapidly. All seemed to be impelled as it were by a restless desire for repose. Cherbury was the only thought in Venetia's mind. She observed nothing; she made no remark during their journey; they travelled often throughout the night; but no obstacles occurred, no inconveniences. There was one in this miserable society whose only object in life was to support Venetia under her terrible visitation. Silent, but with an eye that never slept, George Cadurcis watched Venetia as a nurse might a child. He read her thoughts, he anticipated her wishes without inquiring them; every arrangement was unobtrusively made that could possibly consult her comfort.

They passed through London without stopping there. George would not leave them for an instant; nor would he spare a thought to his own affairs, though they urgently required his attention. The change in his position gave him no consolation; he would not allow his passport to be made out with his title; he shuddered at being called Lord Cadurcis; and the only reason that made him hesitate about attending them to Cherbury was its contiguity to his ancestral seat, which he resolved never to visit. There never in the world was a less selfish and more single-hearted man than George Cadurcis. Though the death of his cousin had invested him with one of the most ancient coronets in England, a noble residence, and a fair estate, he would willingly have sacrificed his life to have recalled Plantagenet to existence, and to have secured the happiness of Venetia Herbert.

CHAPTER II.

THE reader must not suppose, from the irresistible emotion that overcame Venetia at the very moment of her return, that she was entirely prostrated by her calamities. On the contrary, her mind had been employed during the whole of her journey to England, in a silent effort to endure her lot with resignation. She had resolved to bear up against her misery with fortitude, and she inherited from her mother sufficient firmness of mind to enable her to achieve her purpose. She came back to Cherbury to live with patience and submission; and though her dreams of happiness might be vanished for ever, to contribute as much as was in her power to the content of that dear and remaining relative who

was yet spared to her, and who depended in this world only upon the affection of her child. The return to Cherbury was a pang, and it was over. Venetia struggled to avoid the habits of an invalid; she purposed resuming, as far as was in her power, all the pursuits and duties of her life; and if it were neither possible nor even desirable to forget the past, she dwelt upon it neither to sigh nor to murmur, but to cherish in a sweet and musing mood the ties and affections round which all her feelings had once gathered with so much enjoyment and so much hope.

She rose, therefore, on the morning after her return to Cherbury, at least serene; and she took an early opportunity, when George and her mother were engaged, and absent from the terrace-room, to go forth alone and wander amid her old haunts. There was not a spot about the park and gardens, which had been favourite resorts of herself and Plantagenet in their childhood, that she did not visit. They were unchanged; as green, and bright, and still, as in old days, but what was she? The freshness, and brilliancy, and careless happiness of her life, were fled for ever. And here he lived, and here he roamed, and here his voice sounded, now in glee, now in melancholy, now in wild and fanciful amusement, and now pouring into her bosom all his domestic sorrows. It was but ten years since he first arrived at Cherbury, and who could have anticipated that that little, silent, reserved boy should, ere ten years had passed, have filled a wide and lofty space in the world's thought: that his existence should have influenced the mind of nations, and his death eclipsed their gaiety! His death! Terrible and disheartening thought! Plantagenet was no more. But he had not died without a record. His memory was embalmed in immortal verse, and he had breathed his passion to his Venetia in language that lingered in the ear, and would dwell for ever on the lips, of his fellow men.

Among these woods, too, had Venetia first mused over her father; before her rose those mysterious chambers, whose secret she had penetrated at the risk of her life. There were no secrets now. Was she happier? Now she felt that even in her early mystery there was delight, and that hope was veiled beneath its ominous shadow. There was now no future to ponder over; her hope was gone, and memory alone remained. All the dreams of those musing hours of her hidden reveries had been realised. She had seen that father, that surpassing parent, who had satisfied alike her heart and her imagination; she had been clasped to his bosom; she had lived to witness even her mother yield to his penitent embrace. And he too was gone; she could never meet him again in this world—in this world in which they had experienced such exquisite bliss! And now she was once more at

Cherbury! Oh! give her back her girlhood, with all its painful mystery and harassing doubt! Give her again a future!

She returned to the hall; she met George on the terrace, she welcomed him with a sweet, yet mournful smile. "I have been very selfish," she said, "for I have been walking alone. I mean to introduce you to Cherbury, but I could not resist visiting some old spots." Her voice faltered in these last words. They re-entered the terrace-room together, and joined her mother.

"Nothing is changed, mamma," said Venetia, in a more cheerful tone. "It is pleasant to find something that is the same."

Several days passed, and Lord Cadurcis evinced no desire to visit his inheritance. Yet Lady Annabel was anxious that he should do so, and had more than once impressed upon him the propriety. Even Venetia at length said to him, "It is very selfish in us keeping you here, George. Your presence is a great consolation, and yet—yet, ought you not to visit your home?" She avoided the name of Cadurcis.

"I ought, dear Venetia," said George, "and I will. I have promised Lady Annabel twenty times, but I feel a terrible disinclination. To-morrow, perhaps."

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow," murmured Venetia to herself, "I scarcely comprehend now what to-morrow means." And then again addressing him, and with more liveliness, she said, "We have only one friend in the world now, George, and I think that we ought to be very grateful that he is our neighbour."

"It is a consolation to me," said Lord Cadurcis, "for I cannot remain here, and otherwise I should scarcely know how to depart."

"I wish you would visit your home, if only for one morning," said Venetia; "if only to know how very near you are to us."

"I dread going alone," said Lord Cadurcis. "I cannot ask Lady Annabel to accompany me, because——" He hesitated.

"Because?" inquired Venetia.

"I cannot ask or wish her to leave you."

"You are always thinking of me, dear George," said Venetia, artlessly. "I assure you, I have come back to Cherbury to be happy. I must visit your home some day, and I hope I shall visit it often. We will all go—soon," she added.

"Then I will postpone my visit to that day," said George. "I am in no humour for business, which I know awaits me there. Let me enjoy a little more repose at dear Cherbury."

"I have become very restless of late, I think," said Venetia, "but there is a particular spot in the garden that I wish to see. Come with me, George."

Lord Cadurcis was only too happy to attend her. They proceeded through a winding walk in the shrubberies until they

arrived at a small and open plot of turf, where Venetia stopped. "There are some associations," she said, "of this spot connected with both those friends that we have lost. I have a fancy that it should be in some visible manner consecrated to their memories. On this spot, George, Plantagenet once spoke to me of my father. I should like to raise their busts here; and indeed it is a fit place for such a purpose; for poets," she added, faintly smiling, "should be surrounded with laurels."

"I have some thoughts on this head that I am revolving in my fancy myself," said Lord Cadurcis, "but I will not speak of them now."

"Yes, now, George; for indeed it is a satisfaction for me to speak of them, at least with you, with one who understood them so well, and loved them scarcely less than I did."

George tenderly put his arm into hers and led her away. As they walked along, he explained to her his plans, which yet were somewhat crude, but which greatly interested her; but they were roused from their conversation by the bell of the hall sounding, as if to summon them, and therefore they directed their way immediately to the terrace. A servant running met them; he brought a message from Lady Annabel. Their friend the Bishop of * * * * had arrived.

CHAPTER III.

"WELL, my little daughter," said the good Masham, advancing as Venetia entered the room, and tenderly embracing her. The kind-hearted old man maintained a conversation on indifferent subjects with animation for some minutes; and thus a meeting, the anticipation of which would have cost Venetia hours of pain and anxiety, occurred with less uneasy feelings.

Masham had hastened to Cherbury the moment he heard of the return of the Herberts to England. He did not come to console, but to enliven. He was well aware that even his eloquence, and all the influence of his piety, could not soften the irreparable past; and knowing, from experience, how in solitude the unhappy brood over sorrow, he fancied that his arrival, and perhaps his arrival only, might tend in some degree at this moment to their alleviation and comfort. He brought Lady Annabel and Venetia letters from their relations, with whom he had been staying, at their country residence, and who were anxious that their unhappy kinsfolk should find change of scene under their roof.

"They are very affectionate," said Lady Annabel, "but I rather think that neither Venetia nor myself feel inclined to quit Cherbury at present."

"Indeed, not, mamma," said Venetia. "I hope we shall never leave home again."

"You must come and see me some day," said the Bishop; then turning to George, whom he was glad to find here, he addressed him in a hearty tone, and expressed his delight at again meeting him.

Insensibly to all parties this arrival of the good Masham exercised a beneficial influence on their spirits. They could sympathise with his cheerfulness, because they were convinced that he sympathised with their sorrow. His interesting conversation withdrew their minds from the painful subject on which they were always musing. It seemed profanation to either of the three mourners when they were together alone, to indulge in any topic but the absorbing one, and their utmost effort was to speak of the past with composure: but they all felt relieved, though at first unconsciously, when one, whose interest in their feelings could not be doubted, gave the signal of withdrawing their reflections from vicissitudes which it was useless to deplore. Even the social forms which the presence of a guest rendered indispensable, and the exercise of the courtesies of hospitality, contributed to this result. They withdrew their minds from the past. And the worthy bishop, whose tact was as eminent as his good humour and benevolence, evincing as much delicacy of feeling as cheerfulness of temper, a very few days had elapsed before each of his companions was aware that his presence had contributed to their increased content.

"You have not been to the abbey yet, Lord Cadurcis," said Masham to him one day, as they were sitting together after dinner, the ladies having retired. "You should go."

"I have been unwilling to leave them," said George, "and I could scarcely expect them to accompany me. It is a visit that must revive painful recollections."

"We must not dwell on the past," said Masham, "we must think only of the future."

"Venetia has no future, I fear," said Lord Cadurcis.

"Why not?" said Masham, "she is yet a girl, and with a prospect of a long life. She must have a future, and I hope and I believe it will yet be a happy one."

"Alas!" said Lord Cadurcis, "no one can form an idea of the attachment that subsisted between Plantagenet and Venetia. They were not common feelings, or the feelings of common minds, my dear Lord."

"No one knew them both better than I did," said Masham, not even yourself: they were my children."

"I feel that," said George, "and therefore it is a pleasure to us all to see you, and to speak with you."

"But we must look for consolation," said Masham ; "to deplore is fruitless. If we live, we must struggle to live happily. To tell you the truth, though their immediate return to Cherbury was inevitable, and their residence here for a time is scarcely to be deprecated, I still hope they will not bury themselves here. For my part, after the necessary interval, I wish to see Venetia once more in the world."

Lord Cadurcis looked very mournful, and shook his head.

"As for her dear mother, she is habituated to sorrow and disappointment," said Masham. "As long as Venetia lives Lady Annabel will be content. Besides, deplorable as may be the past there must be solace to her in the reflection that she was reconciled to her husband before his death, and contributed to his happiness. Venetia is the stricken lamb, but Venetia is formed for happiness, and it is in the nature of things that she will be happy. We must not, however, yield unnecessarily to our feelings. A violent exertion would be unwise, but we should habituate ourselves gradually to the exercise of our duties, and to our accustomed pursuits. It would be well for you to go to Cadurcis. If I were you I would go to-morrow. Take advantage of my presence ; and return and give a report of your visit. Habituate Venetia to talk of a spot with which ultimately she must renew her intimacy."

Influenced by this advice, Lord Cadurcis rose early on the next morning and repaired to the seat of his fathers, where hitherto his foot had never trod. When the circle at Cherbury assembled at their breakfast table he was missing, and Masham had undertaken the office of apprising his friends of the cause of his absence. He returned to dinner, and the conversation fell naturally upon the Abbey and the impressions he had received. It was maintained at first by Lady Annabel and the Bishop, but Venetia ultimately joined in it, and with cheerfulness. Many a trait and incident of former days was alluded to ; they talked of Mrs. Cadurcis, whom George had never seen ; they settled the chambers he should inhabit ; they mentioned the improvements which Plantagenet had once contemplated, and which George must now accomplish.

"You must go to London first," said the Bishop ; "you have a great deal to do, and you should not delay such business. I think you had better return with me. At this time of the year you need not be long absent ; you will not be detained ; and when you return, you will find yourself much more at ease ; for, after all nothing is more harassing than the feeling, that there is business which must be attended to, and which, nevertheless, is neglected."

Both Lady Annabel and Venetia enforced this advice of their friend ; and so it happened that ere a week had elapsed Lord

Cadurcis, accompanying Masham, found himself once more in London.

CHAPTER IV.

VENETIA WAS NOW once more alone with her mother ; it was as in old times. Their life was the same as before the visit of Plantagenet previous to his going to Cambridge, except indeed that they had no longer a friend at Marringhurst. They missed the Sabbath visits of that good man ; for though his successor performed the duties of the day, which had been a condition when he was presented to the living, the friend who knew all the secrets of their hearts was absent. Venetia continued to bear herself with great equanimity, and the anxiety which she observed instantly impressed on her mother's countenance, the moment she fancied there was unusual gloom on the brow of her child, impelled Venetia doubly to exert herself to appear resigned. And in truth, when Lady Annabel revolved in her mind the mournful past, and meditated over her early and unceasing efforts to secure the happiness of her daughter, and then contrasted her aspirations with the result, she could not acquit herself of having been too often unconsciously instrumental in forwarding a very different conclusion than that for which she had laboured. This conviction preyed upon the mother, and the slightest evidence of reaction in Venetia's tranquillised demeanour occasioned her the utmost remorse and grief. The absence of George made both Lady Annabel and Venetia still more finely appreciate the solace of his society. Left to themselves, they felt how much they had depended on his vigilant and considerate attention, and how much his sweet temper and his unfailing sympathy had contributed to their consolation. He wrote, however, to Venetia by every post, and his letters, if possible, endeared him still more to their hearts. Unwilling to dwell upon their mutual sorrows, yet always expressing sufficient to prove that distance and absence had not impaired his sympathy, he contrived with infinite delicacy even to amuse their solitude with the adventures of his life of bustle. The arrival of the post was the incident of the day ; and not merely letters arrived,—one day brought books, another music ; continually some fresh token of his thought and affection reached them. He was, however, only a fortnight absent ; but when he returned, it was to Cadurcis. He called upon them the next day ; and indeed every morning found him at Cherbury : but he returned to his home at night, and so, without an effort, from their guest he had become their neighbour.

Plantagenet had left the whole of his property to his cousin : his mother's fortune, which, as an accessory fund, was not incon-

siderable, besides the estate. And George intended to devote a portion of this to the restoration of the abbey. Venetia was to be his counsellor in this operation, and therefore there were ample sources of amusement for the remainder of the year. On a high ridge, which was one of the beacons of the county, and which moreover marked the junction of the domains of Cherbury and Cadurcis, it was his intention to raise a monument to the united memories of Marmion Herbert and Plantagenet Lord Cadurcis. He brought down a design with him from London; and this was the project which he had previously whispered to Venetia. With George for her companion, too, Venetia was induced to resume her rides. It was her part to make him acquainted with the county in which he was so important a resident. Time, therefore, at Cherbury on the whole flowed on in a tide of tranquil pleasure, and Lady Annabel observed with interest and fondness the continual presence beneath her roof of one who, from the first day she had met him, had engaged her kind feelings, and had since become intimately endeared to her.

The end of November was, however, now approaching, and Parliament was about to reassemble. Masham had written more than once to Lord Cadurcis, impressing upon him the propriety and expediency of taking his seat. He had shown these letters, as he showed everything, to Venetia, who was his counsellor on all subjects, and Venetia agreed with their friend.

"It is right," said Venetia; "you have a duty to perform, and you must perform it. Besides, I do not wish the name of Cadurcis to sink again into obscurity. I shall look forward with interest to Lord Cadurcis taking the oaths and his seat. It will please me; it will indeed."

"But Venetia," said George, "I do not like to leave this place. I am happy, if we may be happy. This life suits me. I am a quiet man. I dislike London. I feel alone there."

"You can write to us; you will have a great deal to say. And I shall have something to say to you now. I must give you a continual report how they go on at the abbey. I will be your steward, and superintend everything."

"Ah!" said George, "what shall I do in London without you—without your advice? There will be something occurring every day, and I shall have no one to consult. Indeed I shall feel quite miserable; I shall indeed."

"It is quite impossible that, with your station, and at your time of life, you should bury yourself in the country," said Venetia. "You have the whole world before you, and you must enjoy it. It is very well for mamma and myself to lead this life. I look

upon ourselves as two nuns. If Cadurcis is an abbey, Cherbury is now a convent."

"How can a man wish to be more than happy? I am quite content here," said George. "What is London to me?"

"It may be a great deal to you, more than you think," said Venetia. "A great deal awaits you yet. However, there can be no doubt you should take your seat. You can always return if you wish. But take your seat, and cultivate dear Masham. I have the utmost confidence in his wisdom and goodness. You cannot have a friend more respectable. Now mind my advice, George."

"I always do, Venetia."

CHAPTER V.

TIME and Faith are the great consolers; and neither of these precious sources of solace were wanting to the inhabitants of Cherbury. They were again living alone, but their lives were cheerful; and if Venetia no longer indulged in a worldly and blissful future, nevertheless, in the society of her mother, in the resources of art and literature, in the diligent discharge of her duties to her humble neighbours, and in cherishing the memory of the departed, she experienced a life that was not without its tranquil pleasures. She maintained with Lord Cadurcis a constant correspondence; he wrote to her every day, and although they were separated, there was not an incident of his life, and scarcely a thought, of which she was not cognizant. It was with great difficulty that George could induce himself to remain in London; but Masham, who soon obtained over him all the influence which Venetia desired, ever opposed his return to the abbey. The good Bishop was not unaware of the feelings with which Lord Cadurcis looked back to the Hall of Cherbury, and himself of a glad and sanguine temperament, he indulged in a belief in the consummation of all that happiness for which his young friend, rather sceptically, sighed. But Masham was aware that time could alone soften the bitterness of Venetia's sorrow, and prepare her for that change of life which he felt confident would alone ensure the happiness both of herself and her mother. He therefore detained Lord Cadurcis in London the whole of the session, so that on his return to Cherbury, his society might be esteemed a novel and agreeable incident in the existence of its inhabitants, and not be associated merely with their calamities.

It was therefore about a year after the catastrophe which had so suddenly changed the whole tenor of their lives, and occasioned

so unexpected a revolution in his own position, that Lord Cadurcis arrived at his ancestral seat, with no intention of again speedily leaving it. He had long and frequently apprised his friends of his approaching presence, and arriving at the abbey late at night, he was at Cherbury early on the following morning.

Although no inconsiderable interval had elapsed since Lord Cadurcis had parted from the Herberts, the continual correspondence that had been maintained between himself and Venetia, divested his visit of the slightest embarrassment. They met as if they had parted yesterday, except perhaps with greater fondness. The chain of their feelings was unbroken. He was indeed welcomed, both by Lady Annabel and her daughter, with warm affection; and his absence had only rendered him dearer to them by affording an opportunity of feeling how much his society contributed to their felicity. Venetia was anxious to know his opinion of the improvements at the abbey, which she had superintended; but he assured her that he would examine nothing without her company, and ultimately they agreed to walk over to Cadurcis.

It was a summer day, and they walked through that very wood wherein we described the journey of the child Venetia, at the commencement of this very history. The blue patches of wild hyacinths had all disappeared, but there were flowers as sweet. What if the first feelings of our heart fade, like the first flowers of spring, succeeding years, like the coming summer, may bring emotions not less charming, and, perchance, far more fervent!

"I can scarcely believe," said Lord Cadurcis, "that I am once more with you. I know not what surprises me most, Venetia, that we should be walking once more together in the woods of Cherbury, or that I ever should have dared to quit them."

"And yet it was better, dear George," said Venetia. "You must now rejoice that you have fulfilled your duty, and yet you are here again. Besides, the abbey never would have been finished if you had remained. To complete all our plans, it required a mistress."

"I wish it always had one, said George. "Ah! Venetia, once you told me never to despair."

"And what have you to despair about, George?"

"Heigh ho!" said Lord Cadurcis, "I never shall be able to live in this abbey alone."

"You should have brought a wife from London," said Venetia.

"I told you once, Venetia, that I was not a marrying man," said Lord Cadurcis; "and certainly I never shall bring a wife from London."

"Then you cannot accustom yourself too soon to a bachelor's life," said Venetia.

"Ah! Venetia," said George, "I wish I were clever; I wish I were a genius; I wish I were a great man."

"Why, George?"

"Because, Venetia, perhaps," and Lord Cadurcis hesitated, "perhaps you would think differently of me? I mean perhaps your feelings towards me might—ah! Venetia, perhaps you might think me worthy of you—perhaps you might love me."

"I am sure, dear George, if I did not love you, I should be the most ungrateful of beings: you are our only friend."

"And can I never be more than a friend to you, Venetia?" said Lord Cadurcis, blushing very deeply.

"I am sure, dear George, I should be very sorry for your sake, if you wished to be more," said Venetia.

"Why?" said Lord Cadurcis.

"Because I should not like to see you unite your destiny with that of a very unfortunate, if not a very unhappy person."

"The sweetest, the loveliest of women!" said Lord Cadurcis. "O! Venetia, I dare not express what I feel, still less what I could hope. I think so little of myself, so highly of you, that I am convinced my aspirations are too arrogant for me to breathe them."

"Ah! dear George, you deserve to be happy," said Venetia. "Would that it were in my power to make you!"

"Dearest Venetia, it is, it is," exclaimed Lord Cadurcis: then checking himself, as if frightened by his boldness, he added in a more subdued tone, "I feel I am not worthy of you."

They stood upon the breezy down that divided the demesnes of Cherbury and the Abbey. Beneath them rose, "embosomed in a valley of green bowers," the ancient pile lately renovated under the studious care of Venetia.

"Ah!" said Lord Cadurcis, "be not less kind to the master of these towers, than to the roof that you have fostered. You have renovated our halls—restore our happiness! There is an union that will bring consolation to more than one hearth, and baffle all the crosses of adverse fate. Venetia, beautiful and noble-minded Venetia, condescend to fulfil it!"

Perhaps the reader will not be surprised that within a very few months of this morning walk, the hands of George, Lord Cadurcis, and Venetia Herbert were joined in the chapel at Cherbury by the good Masham. Peace be with them!

THE END.

CONTARINI FLEMING.

1831-32.

PREFACE

TO

CONTARINI FLEMING.

THE author proposed to himself, in writing this work, a subject that has ever been held one of the most difficult and refined, and which is virgin in the imaginative literature of every country—namely, the development and formation of the poetic character. It has, indeed, been sometimes incidentally treated, and partially illustrated by writers of the highest class, as for instance Göthe in his “Wilhelm Meister,” where are expounded, with so much felicity, the mysteries of predisposition; and the same illustrious author has, in his capricious memoirs, favoured us with much of his individual experience of self-formation; in this resembling preceding poets, none more conspicuously than Count Alfieri. But an ideal and complete picture of the development of the poet had not been produced,

nor had any one entirely grappled with the thorough formation of that mysterious character with which, though unlike all of us, we all of us so strangely sympathise.

When the author meditated over the entireness of the subject, it appeared to him that the auto-biographical form was a necessary condition of a successful fulfilment. It seemed the only instrument that could penetrate the innermost secrets of the brain and heart in a being, whose thought and passion were so much cherished in loneliness, and revealed often only in solitude. In the earlier stages of the theme, the self-discoverer seemed an indispensable agent. What narrative by a third person could sufficiently paint the melancholy and brooding childhood, the first indications of the predisposition, the growing consciousness of power, the reveries, the loneliness, the doubts, the moody misery, the ignorance of art, the failures, the despair?

Having adopted this conclusion, the author then endeavoured to conceive a character whose position in life should be at variance, and, as it were, in constant conflict with his temperament; and the accidents of whose birth, nevertheless, tended to develop his psychology. The combination that connected in one being Scandinavia and the South, and made the image of a distant and most romantic city continually act upon a nervous temperament, surrounded by the snows

and forests of the North, though novel, it is believed, in literature, was by no means an impossible or even improbable one.

Pursuing an analogous construction, it was resolved, that the first great passion of the poet, the one that would give a colour to the life of such an individual, should arise out of the same circumstance; and in harmony, it is thought, with an organisation of a susceptibility so peculiar, this critical passage in his life is founded upon the extreme mysteries of sympathy, and carried on by the influences of animal magnetism.

This book, written with great care, after deep meditation, and in a beautiful and distant land favourable to composition, with nothing in it to attract the passions of the hour, was published anonymously in the midst of a revolution (1831--2); and it seemed that it must die. But gradually it has gained the sympathy of the thoughtful and the refined, and it has had the rare fortune of being cherished by great men. Now it is offered to a new generation, and bears the name of its author, because, on critically examining it, he finds, that, though written in early youth, it has accomplished his idea. Were he equal to his subject, the book would last, for that subject is eternal.

GROSVENOR GATE,

July, 1845.

CONTARINI FLEMING.

CHAPTER I.

WANDERING in those deserts of Africa that border the Erythræan Sea, I came to the river Nile, to that ancient, and mighty, and famous stream, whose waters yielded us our earliest civilisation, and which, after having witnessed the formation of so many states and the invention of so many creeds, still flow on with the same serene beneficence, like all that we can conceive of Deity—in form sublime, in action systematic, in nature bountiful, in source unknown.

My solitary step sounded in the halls of the Pharaohs. I moved through those imperial chambers supported by a thousand columns, and guarded by colossal forms seated on mysterious thrones: I passed under glittering gates meet to receive the triumphant chariot of a Titan: I gazed on sublime obelisks pointing to the skies, whose secrets their mystic characters affected to conceal. Wherever I threw my sight I beheld vast avenues of solemn sphinxes reposing in supernatural beauty, and melancholy groups of lion-visaged kings; huge walls vividly pictured with the sacred rites and the domestic offices of remote antiquity, or sculptured with the breathing forms of heroic warfare.

And all this might, all this magnificence, all this mystery, all this beauty, all this labour, all this high invention—where were their originators? I fell into deep musing. And the kingdoms of the earth passed before me, from the thrones of the Pharaohs to those enormous dominations that sprang out of the feudal chaos, the unlawful children of ignorance and expediency. And I surveyed the generations of man from Rameses the great, and Memnon the beautiful, to the solitary pilgrim, whose presence now violated the sanctity of their gorgeous sepulchres. And I found that the history of my race was but one tale of rapid destruction or gradual decay.

And in the anguish of my heart I lifted up my hands to the blue æther, and I said, “Is there no hope! What is knowledge, and what is truth? How shall I gain wisdom?”

The wind arose, the bosom of the desert heaved, pillars of sand

sprang from the earth and whirled across the plain; sounds more awful than thunder came rushing from the south; the fane and the palace, the portal and the obelisk, the altar and the throne, the picture and the frieze, disappeared from my sight, and darkness brooded over the land. I knelt down and hid my face in the moveable and burning soil; and as the wind of the desert passed over me, methought it whispered, "Child of Nature, learn to unlearn!"

We are the slaves of false knowledge. Our memories are filled with ideas that have no origin in truth. We learn nothing from ourselves. The sum of our experience is but a dim dream of the conduct of past generations, generations that lived in a total ignorance of their nature. Our instructors are the unknowing and the dead. We study human nature in a charnel-house, and, like the nations of the East, we pay divine honours to the maniac and the fool. A series of systems have mystified existence. We believe what our fathers credited, because they were convinced without a cause. The faculty of thought has been destroyed. Yet our emasculated minds, without the power of fruition, still pant for the charms of wisdom. It is this that makes us fly with rapture to false knowledge—to tradition, to prejudice, to custom. Delusive tradition, destructive prejudice, degenerating custom! It is this that makes us prostrate ourselves with reverence before the wisdom of bygone ages, in no one of which has man been the master of his own reason.

I am desirous of writing a book which shall be all truth: a work of which the passion, the thought, the action, and even the style, should spring from my own experience of feeling, from the meditations of my own intellect, from my own observation of incident, from my own study of the genius of expression.

When I turn over the pages of the metaphysician, I perceive a science that deals in words instead of facts. Arbitrary axioms lead to results that violate reason; imaginary principles establish systems that contradict the common sense of mankind. All is dogma, no part demonstration. Wearied, perplexed, doubtful, I throw down the volume in disgust.

When I search into my own breast, and trace the development of my own intellect, and the formation of my own character, all is light and order. The luminous succeeds to the obscure, the certain to the doubtful, the intelligent to the illogical, the practical to the impossible, and I experience all that refined and ennobling satisfaction that we derive from the discovery of truth, and the contemplation of nature.

I have resolved, therefore, to write the history of my own life, because it is the subject of which I have the truest knowledge.

At an age when some have scarcely entered upon their career, I can look back upon past years spent in versatile adventure and long meditation. My thought has been the consequence of my organisation: my action the result of a necessity not less imperious. My fortune and my intelligence have blended together, and formed my character.

I am desirous of executing this purpose while my brain is still fed by the ardent, though tempered, flame of youth; while I can recal the past with accuracy, and record it with vividness; while my memory is still faithful, and while the dewy freshness of youthful fancy still lingers on my mind.

I would bring to this work the illumination of an intellect emancipated from the fatal prejudices of an irrational education, This may be denied me. Yet some exemption from the sectarian prejudices that embitter life may surely be expected from one who, by a curious combination of circumstances, finds himself without country, without kindred, and without friends; nor will he be suspected of indulging in the delusion of worldly vanity, who, having acted in the world, has retired to meditate in an inviolate solitude, and seeks relief from the overwhelming vitality of thought in the flowing spirit of poetic creation.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN I can first recal existence, I remember myself a melancholy child. My father, Baron Fleming, was a Saxon nobleman of ancient family, who, being opposed to the French interest, quitted his country at the commencement of this century, and after leading for some years a wandering life, entered into the service of a northern court. At Venice, yet a youth, he married a daughter of the noble house of Contarini, and of that marriage I was the only offspring. My entrance into this world was marked with evil, for my mother yielded up her life while investing me with mine. I was christened with the name of her illustrious race. Thus much during the first years of my childhood I casually learnt, but I know not how. I feel I was early conscious that my birth was a subject on which it was proper that I should not speak, and one, the mention of which, it was early instilled into me, would only occasion my remaining parent bitter sorrow. Therefore upon this topic I was ever silent, and with me, from my earliest recollection, Venice was a name to be shunned.

My father again married. His new bride was a daughter of the country which had adopted him. She was of high blood, and very wealthy, and beautiful in the fashion of her land. This union produced two children, both males. As a child, I viewed them with passive antipathy. They were called my brothers, but Nature gave the lie to the reiterated assertion. There was no similitude between us. Their blue eyes, their flaxen hair, and their white visages, claimed no kindred with my Venetian countenance. Wherever I moved I looked around me, and beheld a race different from myself. There was no sympathy between my frame and the rigid clime whither I had been brought to live. I knew not why, but I was unhappy. Had I found in one of my father's new children a sister, all might have been changed. In that sweet and singular tie I might have discovered solace, and the variance of constitution would perhaps between different sexes have fostered, rather than discouraged, affection. But this blessing was denied me. I was alone.

I loved my father dearly and deeply, but I seldom saw him. He was buried in the depth of affairs. A hurried kiss and a passing smile were the fleeting gifts of his affection. Scrupulous care however was taken that I should never be, and should never feel, neglected. I was overloaded with attentions, even as an infant. My stepmother, swayed by my father, and perhaps by a well-regulated mind, was vigilant in not violating the etiquette of maternal duty. No favour was shown to my white brethren which was not extended also to me. To me also, as the eldest, the preference, if necessary, was ever yielded. But for the rest, she was cold and I was repulsive, and she stole from the saloon, which I rendered interesting by no infantile graces, to the nursery, where she could lavish her love upon her troublesome but sympathising offspring, and listen to the wondrous chronicle, which their attendants daily supplied, of their marvellous deeds and almost oracular prattle.

Because I was unhappy I was sedentary and silent—for the lively sounds and the wild gambols of children are but the unconscious outpouring of joy. They make their gay noises, and burst into their gay freaks, as young birds in spring chant in the free air, and flutter in the fresh boughs. But I could not revel in the rushing flow of my new blood, nor yield up my frame to its dashing and voluptuous course. I could not yet analyse my feelings; I could not indeed yet think; but I had an instinct that I was different from my fellow-creatures, and the feeling was not triumph, but horror.

My quiet inaction gained me the reputation of stupidity. In vain they endeavoured to conceal from me their impression. I read it in their looks—in their glances of pity full of learned discernment—

in their telegraphic exchanges of mutual conviction. At last, in a moment of irritation, the secret broke from one of my white brothers. I felt that the urchin spoke truth, but I cut him to the ground. He ran howling and yelping to his dam. I was surrounded by the indignant mother and the domestic police. I listened to their agitated accusations and palpitating threats of punishment with sullen indifference. I offered no defence. I courted their vengeance; it came in the shape of imprisonment. I was conducted to my room, and my door was locked on the outside. I answered the malignant sound by bolting it in the interior. I remained there the whole day, deaf to all their entreaties, without sustenance, feeding only upon my vengeance. Each fresh visit was an additional triumph. I never answered; I never moved. Demands of apology were exchanged for promises of pardon; promises of pardon were in turn succeeded by offers of reward. I gave no sign. I heard them stealing on tiptoe to the portal, full of alarm, and even doubtful of my life. Scarcely would I breathe. At length the door was burst open, and in rushed the half-fainting Baroness and a posse of servants, with the children clinging to their nurses' gowns. Planted in a distant corner, I received them with a grim smile. I was invited away. I refused to move. A man-servant advanced and touched me. I stamped—I gnashed my teeth—I gave a savage growl that made him recoil with dread. The Baroness lost her remaining presence of mind, withdrew with her train, and was obliged to call in my father, to whom all was for the first time communicated.

I heard his well-known step upon the stair. I beheld the face that never looked upon me without a smile—if in carelessness, still, still a smile. Now it was grave, but sad—not harsh.

“Contarini,” he said, in a serious but not angered voice, “what is all this?”

I burst into a wild cry; I rushed to his arms. He pressed me to his bosom. He tried to kiss away the flooding tears that each embrace called forth more plenteously. For the first time in my life I felt happy, because, for the first time in my life, I felt loved.

CHAPTER III.

It was a beautiful garden, full of terraces and arched walks of bowery trees. A tall fountain sprang up from a marble basin, and its glittering column broke in its fall into a thousand coloured drops, and woke the gleamy fish that would have slept in the dim

water. And I wandered about, and the enchanted region seemed illimitable, and at each turn more magical and more bright. Now a white vase shining in the light, now a dim statue shadowed in a cool grot. I would have lingered a moment at the mossy hermitage, but the distant bridge seemed to invite me to new adventures.

It was only three miles from the city, and belonged to the aunt of the Baroness. I was brought hither to play. When the women met there was much kissing, and I also was kissed; but it gave me no pleasure, for I felt even then that it was a form, and I early imbibed a hatred of all this mechanical domestic love. And they sat together, and took out their work, and talked without ceasing, chiefly about the children. The Baroness retold all the wonderful stories of the nurses, many of which I knew to be false. I did not say this, but the conviction gave me, thus early, a contempt for the chatter of women. As soon as I was unobserved I stole away to the garden.

Even then it was ravishing to be alone; and although I could not think, and knew not the cause of the change, I felt serene, and the darkness of my humour seemed to leave me—all was so new and all so beautiful. The bright sweet flowers, and the rich shrubs, and the tall trees, and the fitting birds, and the golden bees, and the gay butterflies, and that constant and soothing hum broken only ever and anon by a strange shrill call, and that wonderful blending of brilliancy, and freshness, and perfume, and warmth—that strong sense of the loveliness and vitality of Nature which we feel amid the growing life of a fair garden—entered into my soul, and diffused themselves over my frame, softened my heart, and charmed my senses.

But all this was not alone the cause of my happiness; for to me the garden was not a piece of earth belonging to my aunt, but a fine world. I wandered about in quest of some strange adventure, which I would fain believe, in so fair a region, must quickly occur. The terrace was a vast desert, over which I travelled for many days; and the mazy walks, so mysterious and unworldly, were an unexplored forest fit for a true knight. And in the hermitage I sought the simple hospitality of a mild and aged host, who pointed to the far bridge as surely leading to a great fulfilment; and my companion was a faithful esquire, whose fidelity was never wanting, and we conversed much, but most respecting a mighty ogre who was to fall beneath my puissant arm. Thus glided many a day in unconscious and creative reverie; but sometimes, when I had explored over and over again each nook and corner, and the illimitable feeling had worn off, the power of imagination grew weak; I found myself alone amid the sweets and sunshine, and fell sad.

But I would not quit this delicious world without an effort, and I invented a new mode of mingling in its life. I reclined beneath a shady tree, and I covered my eyes with my little hand, and I tried to shut out the garish light that seemed to destroy the visions which were ever flitting before me. They came in their beauty, obedient to my call; and I wandered in strange countries, and achieved many noble acts, and said many noble words; and the beings with whom I acted were palpable as myself, with beautiful faces and graceful forms. And there was a brave young knight, who was my friend, and his life I ever saved; and a lovely princess, who spoke not, but smiled ever and ever upon me. And we were lost in vast forests, and shared hard food; and as the evening drew on we came to the gates of a castle.

"Contarini! Contarini!" a voice sounded from the house, and all the sweet visions rushed away like singing-birds scared out of a tree. I was no longer a brave knight; I was a child. I rose miserable and exhausted, and, in spite of a repeated cry, I returned with a slow step and a sullen face.

I saw that there was an unusual bustle in the house. Servants were running to and fro doing nothing, doors were slammed, and there was much calling. I stole into the room unperceived. It was a new comer. They were all standing around a beautiful girl expanding into prime womanhood, and all talking at the same time. There was also much kissing.

It appeared to me that there could not be a more lovely being than the visitor. She was dressed in a blue riding-coat, with a black hat, which had fallen off her forehead. Her full chestnut curls had broken loose; her rich cheek glowed with the excitement of the meeting, and her laughing eyes sparkled with social love.

I gazed upon her unperceived. She must have been at least eight years my senior. This idea crossed me not then. I gazed upon her unperceived, and it was fortunate, for I was entranced. I could not move or speak. My whole system changed; my breath left me. I panted with great difficulty; the colour fled from my cheek, and I was sick from the blood rushing to my heart.

I was seen—I was seized—I was pulled forward. I bent down my head; they lifted it up, drawing back my curls: they lifted it up covered with blushes. She leant down; she kissed me. Oh! how unlike the dull kisses of the morning! But I could not return her embrace; I nearly swooned upon her bosom. She praised, in her good-nature, the pretty boy, and the tone in which she spoke made me doubly feel my wretched insignificance.

The bustle subsided; eating succeeded to talking. Our good aunt was a great priestess in the mysteries of plum-cake and sweet wine. I had no appetite. This was the fruitful theme of much

discussion. I could not eat; I thought only of the fair stranger. They wearied me with their wonderment and their inquiries. I was irritated, and I was irritable. The Baroness schooled me in that dull tedious way which always induces obstinacy. At another time I should have been sullen, but my heart was full and softened, and I wept. My stepmother was alarmed lest, in an unguarded moment, she should have passed the cold, strict line of maternal impartiality which she had laid down for her constant regulation. She would have soothed me with commonplace consolation. I was miserable and disgusted. I fled again to the garden.

I regained with hurrying feet my favourite haunt. Again I sat under my favourite tree; but not now to build castles of joy and hope—not now to commune with my beautiful creation, and revel in the warm flow of my excited fancy. All, all had fled; all, all had changed. I shivered under the cold horror of my reality.

I thought I heard beautiful music, but it was only the voice of a woman.

"Contarini," said the voice, "why do you weep?"

I looked up; it was the stranger—it was Christiana. "Because," I answered, sobbing, "I am miserable."

"Sweet boy," she said, as she knelt down beside me, "dry, dry your tears, for we all love you. Mamma meant not to be cross."

"Mamma! She is not *my* mamma."

"But she loves you like a mother."

"No one loves me."

"All love you, dearest! I love you;" and she kissed me with a thousand kisses.

"Oh, Christiana!" I exclaimed, in a low tremulous voice, "love me—love me always! If *you* do not love me, I shall die!"

I threw my arms around her neck, and a gleam of rapture seemed to burst through the dark storm of my grief. She pressed me to her heart a thousand times, and each time I clung with a more ardent grasp; and, by degrees, the fierceness of my passion died away, and heavy sobs succeeded to my torrents of tears, and light sighs at last came flying after, like clouds in a clearing heaven. Our grief dies away like a thunder-storm.

CHAPTER IV.

THE visit of Christiana was the first great incident of my life. No day passed without my seeing her, either at the Garden-house, or at our own, and each day I grew happier. Her presence, the sound of her voice, one bright smile, and I was a different being; but her caresses, her single society, the possession of her soft hand—all this was maddening. When I was with her in the company of others I was happy, but I indicated my happiness by no exterior sign. I sat by her side, with my hand locked in hers, and I fed in silence upon my tranquil joy. But when we were alone, then it was that her influence over me broke forth. All the feelings of my heart were hers. I concealed nothing. I told her each moment that I loved her, and that until I knew her I was unhappy. Then I would communicate to her in confidence all my secret sources of enjoyment, and explained how I had turned common places into enchanted regions, where I could always fly for refuge. She listened with fondness and delight, and was the heroine of all my sports. Now I had indeed a princess. Strolling with her, the *berceau* was still more like a forest, and the solace of the hermit's cell still more refreshing.

Her influence over me was all-powerful, for she seemed to change my habits and my temper. In kindness she entered into my solitary joys; in kindness she joined in my fantastic amusements; for her own temper was social, and her own delight in pastimes that were common to all. She tried to rouse me from my inaction, she counselled me to mingle with my companions. How graceful was this girl! Grace was indeed her characteristic, her charm. Sometimes she would run away swifter than an arrow, and then, as she was skimming along, suddenly stop, and turn her head with an expression so fascinating, that she appeared to me always like a young sunny fawn.

"Contarini!" she would cry in a clear flute-like voice. How I rushed to her!

I became more amiable to my brothers. I courted more the members of my little society. I even joined in their sports. It was whispered that Contarini was much improved, and the Baroness glanced at me with a kind patronising air, that seemed to hint to the initiated not to press me too heavily with their regulations, or exercise towards one so unpractised, perhaps so incapable, all the severity of their childish legislation.

The visit of Christiana drew to a close. There was a children's ball at our house, and she condescended to be its mistress. Among my new companions there was a boy, who was two years my senior. He had more knowledge of the world than most of us, for he had been some time at school. He was gay, vivacious, talkative. He was the leader in all our diversions. We all envied him his superiority, and all called him conceited. He was ever with Christiana. I disliked him.

I hated dancing, but to-night I had determined to dance, for the honour of our fair president. When the ball opened, I walked up to claim her hand as a matter of course. She was engaged—she was engaged to this youthful hero. Engaged! Was it true! Engaged! Horrible jargon! Were the hollow forms of mature society to interfere with our play of love? She expressed her regret, and promised to dance with me afterwards. She promised what I did not require. Pale and agitated I stole to a corner, and fed upon my mortified heart.

I watched her in the dance. Never had she looked more beautiful; what was worse, never more happy. Every smile pierced me through. Each pressure of my rival's hand touched my brain. I grew sick and dizzy. It was a terrible effort not to give way to my passion. But I succeeded, and escaped from the chamber with all its glaring lights and jarring sounds.

I stopped one moment on the staircase for breath. A servant came up and asked if I wanted anything. I could not answer. He asked if I were unwell. I struggled with my choking voice, and said I was very well. I stole up to my bed-room. I had no light, but a dim moon just revealed my bed. I threw myself upon it, and wished to die.

My forehead was burning hot, my feet were icy cold. My heart seemed in my throat. I felt quite sick. I could not speak; I could not weep; I could not think. Everything seemed blended in one terrible sensation of desolate and desolating wretchedness.

Much time perhaps had not elapsed, although it seemed to me an age, but there was a sound in the room, light and gentle. I looked around; I thought that a shadowy form passed between me and the window. A feeling of terror crossed me. I nearly cried out; but as my lips moved, a warm mouth sealed them with sweetness.

"Contarini," said a voice I could not mistake, "are you unwell?"

I would not answer.

"Contarini, my love, speak to Christiana!"

But the demon prevailed, and I would not speak.

"Contarini, you are not asleep."

Still I was silent.

"Contarini, you do not love me."

I would have been silent, but I sighed.

"Contarini, what has happened? Tell me, tell me, dearest. Tell your Christiana. You know you always tell her everything."

I seized her hand; I bathed it with my fast-flowing tears.

She knelt down as she did on our first meeting in the garden, and clasped me in her arms; and each moment the madness of my mind grew greater. I was convulsed with passion.

And when I grew more calm she again spoke, and asked me what made me so unhappy; and I said, between my wild sobs, "Oh! Christiana, you too have turned against me!"

"Dear, sensitive child," she said, as she pressed me to her bosom, "if you feel so keenly you will never be happy. Turn against you! O! Contarini, who is your friend if not Christiana! Do I not love you better than all the world? Do I not do all I can to make you happy and good? And why should I turn against Contarini, when he is the best and dearest of boys, and loves his Christiana with all his heart and soul?"

She raised me from the bed and placed me in her lap. My head reposed upon her fond and faithful heart. She was silent, for I was exhausted, and I felt her sweet breath descending upon my cheek.

"Go," I said, after some little time, and in a feeble voice, "go, Christiana. They want you."

"Not without you, dearest. I came to fetch you."

"I cannot go. It is impossible: I am so tired."

"Oh! come. I shall be so unhappy if you do not come. You would not have me unhappy the whole evening, this evening that we were to be so gay. See! I will run and fetch a light, and be with you in a moment." And she kissed me and ran away, and in a moment returned.

"Dearest Christiana! I cannot go. What will they think of me?"

"Nobody knows even that you are away: all are busy."

"What will they think of me? Really I cannot go; and my eyes are so red."

"Nonsense! They are the blackest and most beautiful eyes I ever saw."

"Oh! they are horridly red," I answered, looking in the glass. "I cannot go, Christiana."

"They are not in the least red. I will wash them with some eau de Cologne and water."

"Oh! Christiana, do you really love me? Have you really made it up?"

"I love you more than ever. There, let me brush your curls. Is this your brush? What a funny little brush! Dear Contarini, w pretty you look!"



CHAPTER V.

WHEN I was eight years of age a tutor was introduced into the house, and I was finally and formally emancipated from the police of the nursery and the government of women. My tutor was well qualified for his office, according to the existing ideas respecting education, which substitute for the noblest of sciences the vile art of teaching words. He was learned in his acquirements, and literary in his taste, with a calm mind, a bland manner, and a mild voice. The Baroness, who fancied herself a great judge of character, favoured him, before the commencement of his labours, with an epitome of mine. After a year's experience of his pupil, he ventured to express his opinion that I was by no means so slow as was supposed; that, although I had no great power of application, I was not averse to acquiring knowledge; and that if I were not endowed with any very remarkable or shining qualities, my friends might be consoled for the absence of these high powers by my being equally destitute of those violent passions and that ungovernable volition, which were usually attendant upon genius, and too often rendered the most gifted miserable.

I was always a bad learner, and although I loved knowledge from my cradle I liked to acquire it my own way. I think that I was born with a detestation of grammars. Nature seemed to whisper me the folly of learning words instead of ideas, and my mind would have grown sterile for want of manure if I had not taken its culture into my own hands, and compensated by my own tillage for my tutor's bad husbandry. I therefore in a quiet way read every book that I could get hold of, and studied as little as possible in my instructor's museum of verbiage, whether his specimens appeared in the anatomy of a substantive, or the still more disgusting form of a dissected verb.

This period of my life, too, was memorable for a more interesting incident than the introduction of my tutor. For the first time I visited the theatre. Never shall I forget the impression. At length I perceived human beings conducting themselves as I

wished. I was mad for the playhouse, and I had the means of gratifying my mania. I so seldom fixed my heart upon anything, I showed, in general, such little relish for what is called amusement, that my father accorded me his permission with pleasure and facility, and, as an attendant to this magical haunt, I now began to find my tutor of great use.

I had now a pursuit, for when I was not a spectator at the theatre, at home I was an actor. I required no audience—I was happier alone. My chivalric reveries had been long gradually leaving me: now they entirely vanished. As I learnt more of life and nature, I required for my private world something which, while it was beautiful and uncommon, was nevertheless natural and could live. Books more real than fairy tales and feudal romances had already made me muse over a more real creation. The theatre at once fully introduced me to this new existence, and there arose accordingly in my mind new characters. Heroes succeeded to knights, tyrants to ogres, and boundless empire to enchanted castles. "My character also changed with my companions. Before, all was beautiful and bright, but still and mystical. The forms that surrounded me were splendid, the scenes through which I passed glittering, but the changes took place without my agency, or if I acted, I fulfilled only the system of another—for the foundation was the supernatural. Now, if everything were less beautiful, everything was more earnest. I mingled with the warlike and the wise, the crafty, the suffering, the pious—all depended upon our own exertions, and each result could only be brought about by our own simple and human energies—for the foundation was the natural.

Yet at times even this fertile source of enjoyment failed, and the dark spirit which haunted me in my first years would still occasionally descend upon my mind. I knew not how it was, but the fit came upon me in an instant, and often when least counted on. A star, a sunset, a tree, a note of music, the sound of the wind, a fair face flitting by me in unknown beauty, and I was lost. All seemed vapid, dull, spiritless, and flat. Life had no object and no beauty; and I slunk to some solitary corner, where I was content to lie down and die. These were moments of agony, these were moments in which, if I were spoken to, I had no respect for persons. Once I remember my father found me before the demon had yet flown, and, for the first time, he spoke without being honoured.

At last I had such a lengthened fit that it attracted universal attention. I would scarcely move, or speak, or eat for days. There was a general alarm. The Baroness fell into a flutter, lest my father should think that I had been starved to death, or ill-used,

or poisoned, and overwhelmed me with inquiries, each of which severely procrastinated my convalescence. For doubtless, now that I can analyse my past feelings, these dark humours arose only from the want of being loved. Physicians were called in. There were immense consultations. They were all puzzled, and all had recourse to arrogant dogmas. I would not, nay, I could not, assist them. Lying upon the sofa, with my eyes shut, as if asleep, I listened to their conferences. It was settled that I was suffering from a want of nervous energy. Strange jargon, of which their fellow-creatures are the victims! Although young, I looked upon these men with suspicion, if not contempt, and my after life has both increased my experience of their character, and confirmed my juvenile impression.

Change of air and scene were naturally prescribed for an effect by men who were ignorant of the cause. It was settled that I should leave town, accompanied by my tutor, and that we should reside for a season at my father's castle.

CHAPTER VI.

"AND I, too, will fly to Egeria!"

We were discoursing of Pompilius when the thought flashed across me. I no longer listened to his remarks, and I ceased also to answer. My eyes were indeed fixed upon the page, but I perceived nothing, and as it was not yet my hour of liberty, I remained in a soft state of dreamy abstraction.

When I was again free I wandered forth into the park, and I hastened, with a rushing, agitated step, to the spot on which I had fixed.

It was a small dell, and round it grew tall trees with thin and light-coloured leaves. And the earth was everywhere covered with thick fern and many wild flowers. And the dell was surrounded at a very slight distance by a deep wood, out of which white glancing hares each instant darted to play upon the green sunny turf. It was not indeed a sparry grot cool in the sparkling splendour of a southern scene, it was not indeed a spot formed in the indefinite but lovely mould of the regions of my dreams, but it was green, and sweet, and wondrous still.

I threw myself upon the soft yielding fern, and covered my eyes. And a shadowy purple tint was all that I perceived; and as my abstraction grew more intense, the purple lightened into a dusky

white, and this new curtain again into a glittering veil, and the veil mystically disappeared, and I beheld a beautiful and female face.

It was not unlike Christiana, but more dazzling and very pensive. And the eyes met mine, and they were full of serious lustre, and my heart beat, and I seemed to whisper with a very low, but almost ecstatic voice "Egeria!" Yet, indeed, my lips did not move. And the vision beamed with a melancholy smile. And suddenly I found myself in a spacious cave, and I looked up into the face of a beautiful woman, and her countenance was the countenance of the vision. And we were in deep shade, but far out I could perceive a shining and azure land. And the sky was of a radiant purple, and the earth was streaming with a golden light. And there were blue mountains, and bright fields, and glittering vineyards.

And I said nothing, but I looked upon her face, and dwelt upon her beauty. And the hours flew, and the sun set, and the dew descended. And as the sky became less warm the vision gradually died away; and I arose in the long twilight, and I returned home pensive and grave, but full of a soft and palpitating joy.

When I returned I could not eat. My tutor made many observations, many inquiries; but he was a simple man, and I could always quiet him. I sat at the table, full of happiness and almost without motion; and in the evening I stole into a corner, and thought of the coming day with all its rich strange joys.

My life was now one long stream of full felicity. It was, indeed, but one idea, but that idea was as beautiful as it was engrossing. Each day I hastened to the enchanted dell, each day I returned with renewed rapture. I had no thought for anything but my mystic mistress. My studies, always an effort, would now have been insupportable, had I not invented a system by which I rendered even their restraint a new source of enjoyment. I had now so complete a command of my system of abstraction, that, while my eye apparently was employed and interested with my allotted page, I, in fact, perceived nothing but my visionary nymph. My tutor, who observed me always engrossed, could not conceive that I was otherwise than a student, and, when I could remember, I would turn over a leaf, or affect with much anxiety to look out a word in the lexicon, so that his deception was perfect. Then, at the end of the day, I would snatch some hasty five minutes to gain an imperfect acquaintance with my task,—imperfect enough to make him at length convinced, that the Baroness' opinion of my intellect was not so erroneous as he had once imagined.

A short spring and a long summer had passed away thus delightfully, and I was now to leave the castle and return to the capital. The idea of being torn away from Egeria was harrowing. I became again melancholy, but my grief was tender, not savage.

I did not recur to my ancient gloom, for I was prevented by the consoling conviction that I was loved. Yet to her the sad secret must be confided. I could not quit her without preparation. How often in solitary possession of the dreadful fact, have I gazed upon her incomparable face,—how often have I fancied that she was conscious of the terrible truth, and glanced reproachfully even amid her looks of love!

It was told: in broken accents of passionate woe, with streaming eyes, and amid embraces of maddening rapture, it was told. I clung to her, I would have clung to her for ever, but a dark and irresistible destiny doomed us to part, and I was left to my uninspired loneliness.

Returning home from my last visit to the dell I met my tutor. He came upon me suddenly, otherwise I would have avoided him,—as at this moment I would have avoided anything else human. My swollen cheeks, my eyes dim with weeping, my wild and broken walk, attracted even his attention. He inquired what ailed me. His appearance, so different from the radiant being from whom I had lately parted, his voice so strange after the music which yet lingered in my ear, his salutation so varying in style from the one that ever welcomed me, and ever and alone was welcome, the horrible contrast that my situation formed with the condition I had that instant quitted—all this overcame me. I expressed my horror by my extended arms and my averted head. I shuddered and swooned.

CHAPTER VII.

ALTHOUGH I have delineated with some detail the feelings of my first boyhood, I have been indebted for this record to the power of a faithful and analytic memory, and not to an early indulgence in the habits of introspection. For indeed, in these young years, I never thought about myself, or if some extraordinary circumstance impelled me to idiosyncratic contemplation, the result was not cheering. For I well remember that when, on the completion of my eleventh year, being about to repair to a College, where I was to pass some years preparatory to the University, I meditated on this great and coming change, I was impressed with a keen conviction of inferiority. It had sometimes, indeed, crossed my mind that I was of a different order from those around me, but never that the difference was in my favour; and, brooding over the mortifying contrast, which my exploits exhibited in my private and

my public world, and the general opinion which they entertained of me at home, I was at times strongly tempted to consider myself even half a fool.

Though change was ever agreeable, I thought of the vicissitude that was about to occur with the same apprehension that men look forward to the indefinite horror of a terrible operation. And the strong pride that supported me under the fear, and forbade me to demonstrate it, was indeed the cause of my sad forebodings. For I could not tolerate the thought that I should become a general jest and a common agent. And when I perceived the state preparing for me, and thought of Egeria, I blushed. And that beautiful vision, which had brought me such delicious solace, was now only a source of depressing mortification. And for the first time in my life, in my infinite tribulation, and in the agony of my fancy, I mused why there should be such a devilish and tormenting variance between my thought and my action.

The hour came, and I was placed in the heart of a little and busy world. For the first time in my life I was surrounded by struggling and excited beings. Joy, hope, sorrow, ambition, craft, courage, wit, dulness, cowardice, beneficence, awkwardness, grace, avarice, generosity, wealth, poverty, beauty, hideousness, tyranny, suffering, hypocrisy, truth, love, hatred, energy, inertness—they were all there, and all sounded, and moved, and acted, about me. Light laughs, and bitter cries, and deep imprecations, and the deeds of the friendly, the prodigal, and the tyrant, and the exploits of the brave, the graceful, and the gay, and the flying words of native wit, and the pompous sentences of acquired knowledge—how new, how exciting, how wonderful!

Did I tremble? Did I sink into my innermost self? Did I fly? Never. As I gazed upon them, a new principle rose up in my breast, and I perceived only beings whom I was determined to control. They came up to me with a curious glance of half-suppressed glee, breathless and mocking. They asked me questions of gay nonsense with a serious voice and solemn look. I answered in their kind. On a sudden I seemed endowed with new powers, and blessed with the gift of tongues. I spoke to them with a levity which was quite strange to me, a most unnatural ease. I even, in my turn, presented to them questions, to which they found it difficult to respond. Some ran away to communicate their impression to their comrades, some stayed behind, but these became more serious and more natural. When they found that I was endowed with a pregnant and decided character, their eyes silently pronounced me a good fellow; they vied with each other in kindness, and the most important led me away to initiate me in their mysteries.

Weeks flew away, and I was intoxicated with my new life and

my new reputation. I was in a state of ceaseless excitement. It seemed that my tongue never paused: yet each word brought forth a new laugh, each sentence of gay nonsense fresh plaudits. All was rattle, frolic, and wild mirth. My companions caught my unusual manner, they adopted my new phrases, they repeated my extraordinary apophthegms. Everything was viewed and done according to the new tone which I had introduced. It was decided that I was the wittiest, the most original, the most diverting of their society. A coterie of the congenial insensibly formed around me, and my example gradually ruled the choice spirits of our world. I even mingled in their games although I disliked the exertion, and in those in which the emulation was very strong I even excelled. My ambition conquered my nature. It seemed that I was the soul of the school. Wherever I went my name sounded, whatever was done my opinion was quoted. I was caressed, adored, idolised. In a word, I was popular.

Yet sometimes I caught a flying moment to turn aside and contrast my present situation with my past one. What was all this? Was I the same being? But my head was in a whirl, and I had not time or calmness to solve the perplexing inquiry.

There was a boy and his name was Musæus. He was somewhat my elder. Of a kind, calm, docile, mellow nature, moderate in everything, universally liked, but without the least influence; he was the serene favourite of the school. It seemed to me that I never beheld so lovely and so pensive a countenance. His face was quite oval, his eyes deep blue: his rich brown curls clustered in hyacinthine grace upon the delicate rose of his downy cheek, and shaded the light blue veins of his clear white forehead.

I beheld him: I loved him. My friendship was a passion. Of all our society he alone crowded not around me. He was of a cold temperament, shy and timid. He looked upon me as a being whom he could not comprehend, and rather feared. I was unacquainted with his motives, and piqued with his conduct. I gave up my mind to the acquisition of his acquaintance, and of course I succeeded. In vain he endeavoured to escape. Wherever he moved, I seemed unintentionally to hover around him; whatever he wanted, I seemed providentially to supply. In the few words that this slight intercourse called forth, I addressed him in a tone strange to our rough life; I treated him with a courtesy which seemed to elevate our somewhat coarse condition. He answered nothing, was confused, thankful, agitated. He yielded to the unaccustomed tenderness of my manner, to the unwonted refinement of my address. He could not but feel the strange conviction that my conduct to him was different from my behaviour to others, for in truth his presence ever subdued my spirit, and repressed my artificial and excited manner.

Musæus was lowly born, and I was noble; he poor, and I wealthy; I had a dazzling reputation, he but good report. To find himself an object of interest, of quiet and tender regard, to one to whose notice all aspired, and who seemed to exist only in a blaze of cold-hearted raillery and reckless repartee, developed even his dormant vanity. He looked upon me with interest, and this feeling soon matured into fondness.

Oh! days of rare and pure felicity, when Musæus and myself, with our arms around each other's neck, wandered together amid the meads and shady woods that formed our limits! I lavished upon him all the fanciful love that I had long stored up; and the mighty passions that yet lay dormant in my obscure soul now first began to stir in their glimmering abyss. And, indeed, in conversing with this dear companion it was that I first began to catch some glimpses of my yet hidden nature: for the days of futurity were our usual topic, and in parcelling out their fortunes I unconsciously discovered my own desires. I was to be something great, and glorious, and dazzling; but what, we could not determine. The camp and the senate, the sword and the scroll, that had raised and had destroyed so many states; these were infinitely discussed. And then a life of adventure was examined, full of daring delight. One might be a corsair or a bandit. Foreign travel was what we could surely command, and must lead to much. I spoke to him, in the fulness of our sweet confidence, of the strangeness of my birth, and we marvelled together over mysterious Venice. And this led us to conspiracies, for which I fancied that I had a predisposition. But in all these scenes Musæus was to be never absent. He was to be my heart's friend from the beginning to the death. And I mourned that nature had given me no sister, with whom I could bind him to me by a still stronger and sweeter tie. And then, with a shy, hesitating voice, for he delighted not in talking of his home, he revealed to me that he was more blessed: and Caroline Musæus rose up at once to me like a star, and without having seen her I was indeed her betrothed.

Thus, during these bright days did I pour forth all the feelings I had long treasured up; and in endeavouring to communicate my desires to another, I learnt to think. I ascended from indefinite reverie to palpable cogitation.

I was now seldom alone. To be the companion of Musæus I participated in many pastimes, which otherwise I should have avoided, and in return he, although addicted to sports, was content, for my sake, to forego much former occupation. With what eagerness I rushed when the hour of study ceased, with what wild eagerness I rushed to resume our delicious converse! Nor indeed was his image ever absent from me; and when in the hour of school we passed

each other, or our countenances chanced to meet, there was ever a sweet, faint smile, that, unmarked by others, interchanged our love.

A love that I thought must last for ever, and for ever flow like a clear bright stream; yet at times my irritable passions would disturb even these sweet waters. The temperament of Musæus was cold and slow. I was at first proud of having interested his affection, but as our friendship grew apace, I was not contented with this calm sympathy and quiet regard. I required that he should respond to my affection with feelings not less ardent and energetic than mine own. I was sensitive, I was jealous. I found a savage joy in harrowing his heart; I triumphed when I could draw a tear from his beautiful eye; when I could urge him to unaccustomed emotion; when I forced him to assure me, in a voice of agitation, that he loved me alone, and pray me to be pacified.

From sublime torture to ridiculous teasing, too often Musæus was my victim. One day I detected an incipient dislike to myself, or a growing affection for another; then I passed him in gloomy silence, because his indispensable engagements had obliged him to refuse my invitation to our walk. But the letters with which I overwhelmed him under some of these contingencies—these were the most violent infliction. What pages of mad eloquence!—solemn appeals, bitter sarcasms, infinite ebullitions of frantic sensibility. For the first time in my life I composed. I grew intoxicated with my own eloquence. A new desire arose in my mind, novel aspirations which threw light upon old and often-experienced feelings. I began to ponder over the music of language; I studied the collocation of sweet words, and constructed elaborate sentences in lonely walks. Poor Musæus quite sunk under the receipt of my effusions. He could not write a line; and had he indeed been able, it would have been often difficult for him to have discovered the cause of our separations. The brevity, the simplicity of his answers were irresistible and heartrending. Yet these distractions brought with them one charm, a charm to me so captivating, that I fear it was sometimes a cause—reconciliation was, indeed, a love-feast.

The sessions of our College closed. The time came that Musæus and myself must for a moment part—but for a moment, for I intended that he should visit me in our vacation, and we were also to write to each other every week. Yet, even under these palliating circumstances, parting was anguish.

On the eve of the fatal day we took our last stroll in our favourite meads. The whole way I wept, and leant upon his shoulder. With what jealous care I watched to see if he too shed a tear! One clear drop at length came quivering down his cheek, like dew upon a rose. I pardoned him for its beauty. The bell sounded. I embraced him, as if it sounded for my execution, and we parted.

CHAPTER VIII.

I WAS once more at home, once more silent, once more alone. I found myself changed. My obscure aspirations after some indefinite happiness, my vague dreams of beauty, or palpable personifications of some violent fantastic idea, no longer inspired, no longer soothed, no longer haunted me. I thought only of one subject, which was full of earnest novelty, and abounded in interest, curious, serious, and engrossing. I speculated upon my own nature. My new life had developed many qualities, and had filled me with self-confidence. The clouds seemed to clear off from the dark landscape of my mind, and vast ambition might be distinguished on the far horizon, rearing its head like a mighty column. My energies stirred within me, and seemed to pant for the struggle and the strife. A deed was to be done—but what? I entertained at this time a deep conviction that life must be intolerable unless I were the greatest of men. It seemed that I felt within me the power that could influence my kind. I longed to wave my inspiring sword at the head of armies, or dash into the very heat and blaze of eloquent faction.

When I contrasted my feelings and my situation I grew mad. The constant jar between my conduct and my conceptions was intolerable. In imagination a hero, I was in reality a boy. I returned from a victorious field to be criticised by a woman: in the very heart of a deep conspiracy, which was to change the fate of nations, to destroy Rome or to free Venice, I was myself the victim of each petty domestic regulation. I cannot describe the insane irritability which all this produced. Infinite were the complaints of my rudeness, my violence, my insufferable impertinence, incessant the threats of pains and penalties. It was universally agreed that college had ruined me. A dull, slow boy I had always been; but, at least, I was tolerably kind and docile. Now, as my tutor's report correctly certified, I was not improved in intellect, and all witnessed the horrible deterioration of my manners and my morals.

The Baroness was in despair. After several smart skirmishes, we at length had a regular pitched battle.

She began our delightful colloquy in the true style of domestic reprimand; dull, drony nonsense, adapted, as I should hope, to no state in which human intellect can ever be found, even if it have received the full benefit of the infernal tuition of nurses, which would be only ridiculous, if its effects were not so fatally and per-

manently injurious. She told me that whenever I spoke I should speak in a low voice, and that I should never think for myself; that if anything were refused I should be contented, and never ask the reason why, because it was not proper ever to ask questions, particularly when we were sure that everything was done for our good; that I should do everything that was bidden, and always be ready to conform to everybody's desires, because at my age no one should have a will of his own; that I should never, on any account, presume to give my opinion, because it was quite impossible that one so young could have one; that on no account, also, should I ever be irritable, which never could be permitted: but she never considered that every effect has a cause, and never attempted to discover what might occasion this irritability. In this silly, superficial way she went on for some time, repeating dull axioms by rote, and offering to me the same useless advice that had been equally thrown away upon the tender minds of her generation.

She said all this, all this to me, all this to one who a moment before was a Cæsar, an Alcibiades. Now I had long brooded over the connexion that subsisted between myself and this lady. I had long formed in my mind, and caught up from books, a conception of the relations which must exist between a step-mother and her unwelcome son. I was therefore prepared. She grew pale as I described in mad heroics our exact situation. She had no idea that any people, under any circumstances, could be influenced by such violent, such wicked, such insane sentiments. She stared in stupid astonishment at my terrible and unexpected fluency. She entirely lost her presence of mind and burst into tears—tears not of affection, but of absolute fright, the hysteric offspring of a cold, alarmed, puzzled mind.

She vowed she would tell my father. I inquired with a malignant sneer, of what? She protested she certainly would tell. I dilated on the probability of a stepdame's tale. Most certainly she would tell. I burst into a dark, foaming rage. I declared that I would leave the house, that I would leave the country, that I would submit no longer to my intolerable life, that suicide (and here I kicked down a chair) should bring me immediate relief. The Baroness was terrified out of her life. The fall of the chair was the perfection of fear. She was one of those women who have the highest respect for furniture. She could not conceive a human being, much less a boy, voluntarily kicking down a chair, if his feelings were not very keen indeed. It was becoming too serious. She tried to soothe me. She would not speak to my father. All should be right, all should be forgotten, if I only would not commit suicide, and not kick down the chairs.

After some weeks Musæus paid his long-meditated visit. I had never, until I invited him, answered his solitary letter. I received him with a coldness which astonished me, and must have been apparent to any one but himself. I was distressed by the want of unction in my manner, and tried to compensate by a laboured hospitality which, like ice, was dazzling but frigid. Many causes perhaps conduced to occasion this change, then inscrutable to me. Since we had parted I had indulged in lofty ideas of self, and sometimes remembered, with a feeling approaching to disgustful mortification, the influence which had been exercised over me by a fellow child. The reminiscence savoured too much of boyish weakness, and painfully belied my proud theory of universal superiority. At home, too, when the permission for the invitation was accorded, there was much discussion as to the quality of the invited. They wished to know who he was, and when informed looked rather grave. Some caution was muttered about the choice of my companions. Even my father, who seldom spoke to me, seemed alarmed at the prospect of a bad connexion. His intense worldliness was shocked. He talked to me for an unusual time upon the subject of school friendships, and his conversation, which was rare, made an impression. All this influenced me, for at that age I was of course the victim of every prejudice. Must I add to all this, what is perhaps the sad and dreary truth, that in loving all this time Musæus with such devotion, I was in truth rather enamoured of the creature of my imagination than the companion of my presence. Upon the foundation which he had supplied I had built a beautiful and enchanted palace. Unceasing intercourse was a necessary ingredient to the spell. We parted, and the fairy fabric dissolved into the clouds.

Certain it is that his visit was a failure. Musæus was too little sensitive to feel the change of my manner, and my duty as his host impelled me to conceal it. But the change was great. He appeared to me to have fallen off very much in his beauty. The Baroness thought him a little coarse, and praised the complexion of her own children, which was like chalk. Then he wanted constant attention, for it was evident that he had no resources of his own and certainly he was not very refined. But he was pleased, for he was in a new world. For the first time in his life he moved in theatres and saloons, and mingled in the splendour of high civilisation. I took him everywhere; in fact I could bear everything but to be alone with him. So he passed a very pleasant fortnight and then quitted us. How different from our last parting! Cheerful indeed it was, and, in a degree, cordial. I extended him my hand with a patronising air, and mimicking the hollow courtesy of

maturer beings, I expressed, in a flimsy voice of affected regard, a wish that he might visit us again. And six weeks before I had loved this boy better than myself—would have perilled for him my life, and shared with him my fortune!

CHAPTER IX.

I RETURNED to College gloomy and depressed. Not that I cared for quitting home: I hated home. I returned in the fulness of one of my dark humours, and which promised to be one of the most terrible visitations that had ever fallen upon me. Indeed, existence was intolerable, and I should have killed myself had I not been supported by my ambition, which now each day became more quickening, so that the desire of distinction and of astounding action raged in my soul; and when I recollected that, at the soonest, many years must elapse before I could realise my ideas, I gnashed my teeth in silent rage, and cursed my existence.

I cannot picture the astonishment that pervaded our little society, when they found the former hero of their gaiety avoiding all contact and conversation, and always moving about in gloomy silence. It was at first supposed that some great misfortune had happened to me, and inquiries were soon afloat, but nothing could be discovered. At length one of my former prime companions, I should say, perhaps, patrons, expostulated with me upon the subject: I assured him, with grim courtesy, that nothing had happened, and wished him good morning. As for Musæus, I just contrived to greet him the first day with a faint, agonising smile, and ever after I shunned him. Nothing could annoy Musæus long, and he would soon have forgotten his pain, as he had already, perhaps, freed his memory from any vivid recollection of the former pleasure which our friendship had undoubtedly brought him. He welcomed enjoyment with a smile, and was almost as cheerful when he should have been much less pleased.

But although Musæus was content to be thus quiet, the world in which he lived determined that he should be less phlegmatic. As they had nothing better to do, they took his quarrel upon themselves. "He certainly has behaved infamously to Musæus. You know they were always together. I wonder what it can be! As for the rest of the school, that is in comparison nothing; but Musæus—you know they were decided cronies. I never knew fellows more together. I wonder what it can be! If I were

Musæus I certainly would come to an explanation. We must put him up to it. If Musæus asks him he cannot refuse, and then we shall know what it is all about."

They at length succeeded in beating it into poor Musæus' head, that he had been very ill-treated and must be very unhappy, and they urged him to insist upon an explanation. But Musæus was no hand at demanding explanation; and he deputed the task to a friend.

I was alone, sitting on a gate, in a part of the grounds which was generally least frequented, when I heard a shout which, although I could not guess its cause, sounded in my ear with something of a menacing and malignant expression. The whole school, headed by the deputy, were finding me out, in order that the important question might be urged, that the honour of Musæus might be supported, and their own curiosity gratified.

Now at that age, whatever I may be now, I could not be driven. A soft word, and I was an Abel; an appearance of force, and I scowled a Cain. Had Musæus, instead of being a most commonplace character, which assuredly he was—had it been in his nature to have struck out a single spark of ardent feeling, to have indulged in a single sigh of sentiment, he might perhaps yet have been my friend. His appeal might have freed me from the domination of the black spirit, and in weeping over our reconciliation upon his sensitive bosom I might have been emancipated from its horrid thrall. But the moment that Musæus sought to influence my private feelings by the agency of public opinion, he became to me, instead of an object of indifference, an object of disgust; and only not of hatred, because of contempt.

I did not like the shout; and when, at a considerable distance, I saw them advancing towards the gate with an eager run, I was almost tempted to retire: but I had never yet flinched in the course of my life, and the shame which I now felt at the contemplation of such an act impelled me to stay.

They arrived, and gathered round me; they did not know how to commence their great business: breathless and agitated, they looked first at their embarrassed leader and then at me.

When I had waited a sufficient time for my dignity, I rose to quit the place.

"We want you, Fleming," said the chief.

"Well!" and I turned round and faced the speaker.

"I tell you what, Fleming," said he, in a rapid, nervous style, "you may think yourself a very great man; but we do not exactly understand the way you are going on. There is Musæus; you and he were the greatest friends last half, and now you do not speak to him, nor to any one else. And we all think that you

should give an explanation of your conduct. And, in short, we come here to know what you have got to say for yourself."

"Do you!" I answered with a sneer.

"Well, what have you got to say?" he continued, in a firmer voice and more peremptory tone.

"Say! say that either you or I must leave this gate. I was here first, but as you are the largest number, I suppose I must yield."

I turned my heel upon him and moved. Some one hissed. I returned, and inquired in a very calm, mild voice, "Who hissed?"

Now the person who hissed was a boy, who was indeed my match in years, and perhaps in force, but a great coward. I knew it was he, because he was just the fellow who would hiss, and looked quite pale when I asked the question. Besides, no one answered it, and he was almost the only boy who, under such circumstances, would have been silent.

"Are you afraid to own it?" I asked, in a contemptuous tone, but still very subdued.

This great mob of nearly two hundred boys were very much ashamed at the predicament in which their officious and cowardly member had placed them. So their leader, proud in a fine frame, a great and renowned courage, unrivalled achievements in combat, and two years of superiority in age over myself, advanced a little, and said, "Suppose I hissed, what then?"

"What then!" I exclaimed, in a voice of thunder, and with an eye of lightning—"What then! Why, then, I would thrash you."

There was an instantaneous flutter and agitation, and panting monosyllabic whisper in the crowd; they were like birds, when the hawk is first detected in airy distance. Unconsciously, they withdrew like waves, and, the arena being cleared, my opponent and I were left in opposition. Apparently there never was a more unequal match; but indeed he was not fighting with Contarini Fleming, but with a demon that had usurped his shape.

"Come on, then," he replied, with brisk confidence.

And I came—as the hail upon the tall corn. I flew at him like a wild beast; I felt not his best blow, I beat down his fine guard, and I sent him to the ground, stunned and giddy.

He was up again in a moment; and indeed I would not have waited for their silly rules of mock combat, but have destroyed him in his prostration. But he was up again in a moment. Again I flew upon him. He fought with subtle energy, but he was like a serpent with a tiger. I fixed upon him: my blows told with the rapid precision of machinery. His bloody visage was not to be distinguished. I believe he was terrified by my frantic air.

I would never wait between the rounds. I cried out in a voice of madness for him to come on. There was breathless silence. They were thunderstruck. They were too generous to cheer their leader. They could not refrain from sympathising with inferior force and unsupported courage. Each time that he came forward I made the same dreadful spring, beat down his guard, and never ceased working upon his head, until at length my fist seemed to enter his very brain; and after ten rounds he fell down quite blind. I never felt his blows—I never lost my breath.

He could not come to time—I rushed forward—I placed my knee upon his chest. “I fight no more,” he faintly cried.

“Apologise,” I exclaimed; “apologise.” He did not speak.

“By heavens, apologise,” I said, “or I know not what I shall do.”

“Never!” he replied.

I lifted up my arm. Some advanced to interfere. “Off,” I shouted; “Off, off.” I seized the fallen chief, rushed through the gate, and dragged him like Achilles through the mead. At the bottom there was a dunghill. Upon it I flung the half inanimate body.

CHAPTER X.

I STROLLED away to one of my favourite haunts; I was calm and exhausted: my face and hands were smeared with gore. I knelt down by the side of the stream, and drank the most delicious draught that I had ever quaffed. I thought that I should never have ceased. I felt invigorated, and a plunge in the river completed my renovation.

I reclined under a branching oak, and moralised on the past. For the first time in my life I had acted. Hitherto I had been a creature of dreams; but within the last month unconsciously I found myself a stirrer in existence. I perceived that I had suddenly become a responsible agent. There were many passions, many characters, many incidents. Love, hatred, faction, vengeance, Musæus, myself, my antagonist, his followers, who were indeed a world; our soft walks, the hollow visit, the open breach, the organised party, the great and triumphant struggle.

And as I mused, all these beings flitted across my vision, and all that had passed was again present, and again performed, except indeed that my part in the drama was of a more studied and perfect

cast; for I was conscious of much that had been omitted both in conversation and in conduct—of much that might have been finely expressed and dexterously achieved. And to introduce all this I indulged in imaginary scenes. There was a long interview between myself and Musæus—harrowing; a logomachy between myself and the chief of the faction—pungent. I became so excited that I could no longer restrain the outward expression of my feeling. My voice broke into impassioned tones; I audibly uttered the scornful jest. My countenance was in harmony with my speech; my action lent a more powerful meaning to my words.

And suddenly there was a great change, the order of which I cannot trace; for Musæus, though he looked upon me, was not Musæus, but a youth in a distant land; and I was there in a sumptuous dress, with a brilliant star; and we were friends. And a beautiful woman rose up—a blending of Christiana and Egeria. Both of us loved her, and she yielded herself to me, and Musæus fled for aid. And there came a king with a great power, and as I looked upon his dazzling crown, lo! it encircled the brow of my late antagonist.

And I beheld and felt all this growing and expanding life with a bliss so keen, so ravishing, that I can compare it to nothing but to joys which I was then too young even to anticipate. My brain seemed to melt into a liquid, rushing stream; my blood quickened into action, too quick even to recognise pulsation—fiery and fleet, yet delicate and soft. With difficulty I breathed, yet the oppression was delicious. But in vain I endeavour to paint the refined excitement of this first struggle of my young creation.

The drama went on, nor was it now in my power to restrain it. At length, oppressed with the vitality of the beings I had formed—dazzled with the shifting brilliancy of the scenes in which they moved—exhausted with the marvellous action of my shadowy self, who figured before me in endless exploit—now struggling, now triumphing, now pouring forth his soul in sentences of burning love, now breathing a withering blast of proud defiance—I sought for means to lay the wild ghosts that I had unconsciously raised.

I lifted my hand to my face, that had been gazing all this time in fixed abstraction upon a crimson cloud. There was a violent struggle which I did not comprehend. Everything was chaos; but soon, as it were, a mystic music came rising out of the incongruous mass; a mighty secret was revealed to me—all was harmony, and order, and repose, and beauty. The whirling scene no longer changed; there was universal stillness; and the wild beings ceased their fierce action, and, bending down before me in humility, proffered their homage to their creator.

"Am I, then," I exclaimed, looking around with an astonished and vacant air—"am I then, after all, a poet?"

I sprang up—I paced up and down before the tree, but not in thought. The perspiration ran down my forehead—I trembled—I panted—I was lost. I was not conscious of my existence. My memory deserted me—the rudder of my mind broke away.

My thought came back; I threw myself on the ground. "Yes," I exclaimed, "beautiful beings, I will release you from the prison-house of my brain! I will give you to freedom and to light! You shall exist not only for me—you shall go forth to the world to delight and to conquer."

And this was the first time in my life that the idea of literary creation occurred to me; for I disliked poetry, of which indeed I had read little, except plays: and although I took infinite delight in prose fiction, it was only because the romance or the novel offered to me a life more congenial to my feelings than the world in which I lived. But the conviction of this day threw light upon my past existence. My imaginary deeds of conquest—my heroic aspirations—my long, dazzling dreams of fanciful adventure—were, perhaps, but sources of ideal action—that stream of eloquent and choice expression which seemed ever flowing in my ear, was probably intended to be directed in a different channel from human assemblies, and might melt or kindle the passions of mankind in silence. And the visions of beauty and the vows of love—were they, too, to glitter and to glow only in imagination?

CHAPTER XI.

I REPAIRED the next day to my favourite tree, armed with a pencil and a paper book. My mind was, as I thought, teeming with ideas. I had composed the first sentence of my work in school-time; it seemed to me full of music. I had repeated it a thousand times; I was enchanted with its euphony. It was now written—fairly written. With rapture I perceived it placed in its destined position. But what followed? Nothing. In vain I rubbed my forehead; in vain I summoned my fancies. The traitors would not listen. My mind seemed full to the very brink, but not a drop of the rich stream overflowed. I became anxious, nervous, fretful. I walked about: I re-seated myself. Again I threw down the pencil, and was like a man disenchanted. I could scarcely recal the visions of yesterday, and if with an effort I succeeded, they

appeared cold, tame, dull, lifeless. Nothing can describe my blank despair.

They know not—they cannot tell—the cold, dull world; they cannot even remotely conceive the agony of doubt and despair which is the doom of youthful genius. To sigh for fame in obscurity is like sighing in a dungeon for light; yet the votary and the captive share an equal hope. But, to feel the strong necessity of fame, and to be conscious that without intellectual excellence life must be insupportable—to feel all this with no simultaneous faith in your own power—these are moments of despondency for which no immortality can compensate.

As for myself, repeated experiments only brought repeated failures. I would not die without a struggle, but I struggled only to be vanquished. One day was too hot; another I fancied too cold. Then, again, I was not well, or perhaps I was too anxious; I would try only a sentence each day. The trial was most mortifying, for I found, when it came to this practical test, that in fact I had nothing to write about. Yet my mind had been so full; and even now a spark, and it would again light up; but the flame never kindled, or, if ever I fanned an appearance of heat, I was sure only to extinguish it. Why could I not express what I seemed to feel? All was a mystery.

I was most wretched. I wandered about in very great distress, for my pride was deeply wounded, and I could no longer repose on my mind with confident solace. My spirit was quite broken. Had I fought my great battle now I should certainly have been beaten. I was distracted with disquietude; I had no point of refuge—hope utterly vanished. It was impossible that I could be anything; I must always fail. I hated to think of myself; the veriest dunce in the school seemed my superior. I grew meek and dull. I learnt my dry lessons; I looked upon a grammar with a feeling of reverence. My lexicon was constantly before me; but I made little advance. I no longer ascribed my ill progress to the uninteresting task, but to my own incapacity. I thought myself, once more, half a fool.

CHAPTER XII.

HAD I now been blessed with a philosophic friend, I might have found consolation and assistance; but my instructors, to whom I had a right to look up for this aid, were, of course, wanting. The system which they pursued taught them to consider their pupils as

machines, which were to fulfil a certain operation, and this operation was word-learning. They attempted not to discover, or to develop, or to form character. Predisposition was to them a dark oracle—organisation; a mystery in which they were not initiated. The human mind was with them always the same soil, and one to which they brought ever the same tillage. And mine was considered a sterile one, for they found that their thistles did not flourish where they should have planted roses.

I was ever considered a lazy, idle boy, because I required ideas instead of words. I never would make any further exertion than would save me from their punishments: their rewards I did not covet. Yet I was ever reading, and in general knowledge was immeasurably superior to all the students—for aught I know, to all the tutors; for indeed, in any chance observations in which they might indulge, I could even then perceive that they were individuals of limited intelligence. They spoke sometimes of great men, I suppose for our emulation; but their great men were always commentators. They sometimes burst into an eulogium of a great work; you might be sure it was ever a huge bunch of annotations. An unrivalled exploit turned out to be a happy conjecture: a marvellous deed was the lion's skin that covered the ears of a new reading. I was confounded to hear the same epithets applied to their obscure demigods that I associated with the names of Cæsar, and Socrates, and Pericles, and Cicero. It was perplexing to find that Pharsalia or a philippic, the groves of Academus or the fanes of the Acropolis, could receive no higher admiration than was lavished upon the unknown exploits of a hunter after syllables.

After my battle I was never annoyed by my former friends. As time advanced I slightly relaxed in my behaviour, and when it was necessary we interchanged words; but I never associated with any one. I was, however, no longer molested. An idea got afloat that I was not exactly in my perfect senses; and, on the whole, I was rather feared than disliked.

Reading was my only resource. I seldom indulged in reverie. The moment that I perceived my mind wandering, I checked it with a mixed feeling of disgust and terror. I made, however, during this period, more than one attempt to write, and always with signal discomfiture. Neither of the projected subjects in any way grew out of my own character, however they might have led to its delineation had I proceeded. The first was a theme of heroic life, in which I wished to indulge in the gorgeousness of remote antiquity. I began with a fine description, which again elevated my hopes, but when the scene was fairly painted my actors would not come on. I flung the sheet into the river, and cursed my repeated idiocy.

After an exposure of this kind I always instantaneously became practical, and grave, and stupid; as a man, when he recovers from intoxication, vows that he will never again taste wine. Nevertheless, during the vacation, a pretty little German lady unfortunately one night took it into her head to narrate some of the traditions of her country. Among these I heard, for the first time, the story of the Wild Huntsman of Rodenstein. It was most unlucky. The Baroness, who was a fine instrumental musician, but who would never play when I requested her, chanced this night to be indulging us. The mystery and the music combined their seductive spells, and I was again enchanted. Infinite characters and ideas seemed rushing in my mind. I recollected that I had never yet given my vein a trial at home. Here I could command silence, solitude, hours unbroken and undisturbed. I walked up and down the room, once more myself. The music was playful, gay, and joyous. A village dance was before my vision; I marked with delight the smiling peasantry bounding under the clustering vines, the girls crowned with roses, the youth adorned with flowing ribbons. Just as a venerable elder advanced the sounds became melancholy, wild, and ominous. I was in a deep forest, full of doubt and terror—the wind moaned—the big branches heaved—in the distance I heard the baying of a hound. It did not appear, for suddenly the trumpet announced a coming triumph; I felt that a magnificent procession was approaching, that each moment it would appear; each moment the music became louder, and already an advanced and splendid guard appeared in the distance. I caught a flashing glimpse of a sea of waving plumes and glistening arms. The music ceased—the procession vanished—I fell from the clouds; I found myself in a dull drawing-room, a silly boy, very exhausted.

I felt so excessively stupid that I instantly gave up all thoughts of the Hunter of Rodenstein, and went to bed gloomy and without hope. But in the morning, when I rose, the sun was shining so softly, the misty trees and the dewy grass were so tender and so bright, the air was so fresh and fragrant, that my first feeling was the desire of composition, and I walked forth into the park cheerful, and moved by a rising faith.

The exciting feelings of the evening seemed to return, and, when I had sufficiently warmed my mind with reverie, I sat down to my table surrounded by every literary luxury that I could remember. Ink enclosed in an ormulu Cupid, clear and brilliant, quires of the softest cream-coloured paper, richly gilt, and a perfect magazine of the finest pens. I was exceedingly nervous, but on the whole not unsuccessful. I described a young traveller arriving at night at a small inn on the borders of a Bohemian forest. I did not allow a single portion of his dress to escape, and even his steed

and saddle-bags duly figured. The hostess was founded on our housekeeper, therefore I was master of my subject. From her ear-rings to her shoe-buckles all was perfect. I managed to supply my hero with a supper, and at length I got him, not to bed, but to his bed-room—for heroes do not get into bed, even when wearied, with the expedition of more commonplace characters. On the contrary, he first opened the window—it was a lattice-window—and looked at the moon. I had a very fine moonlight scene. I well remember that the trees were tipped with silver, but oh! triumph of art, for the first time in my life I achieved a simile, and the evening breeze came sounding in his ear soft as a lover's sigh!

This last master-touch was too much for me. Breathless, and indeed exhausted, I read over the chapter. I could scarcely believe its existence possible. I rushed into the park, and hurried to some solitude where, undisturbed by the sight of a human being, I could enjoy my intended existence.

I was so agitated, I was in such a tumult of felicity, that for the rest of the day I could not even think. I could not find even time to determine on my hero's name, or to ascertain the reason for which I had brought him to such a wild scene, and placed him in such exceedingly uncomfortable lodgings. The next morning I had recovered my self-possession. Calm and critical, I reviewed the warm product of my brain which had the preceding day so fascinated me. It appeared to me that it had never been my unfortunate fate to read more crude, rugged, silly stuff in the whole course of my experience. The description of costume, which I had considered so perfect, sounded like a catalogue of old clothes. As for the supper, it was very evident that so lifeless a personage could never have an appetite. What he opened the window for I know not; but certainly, if only to look at the moon he must have been disappointed, for in spite of all my asseverations, it was very dim indeed; and as for the lover's sigh, at the same time so tame and so forced, it was absolutely sickening.

I threw away the wretched effusion, the beautiful inkstand, the cream-coloured paper, the fine pens—away they were all crammed in a drawer, which I was ever after ashamed to open. I looked out of the window, and saw the huntsman going out. I called to him, and joined him. I hated field-sports, indeed every bodily exertion, except riding, which is scarcely one; but now anything that was bodily, that was practical, pleased, and I was soon slaughtering birds in the very bowers in which I had loved Egeria.

On the whole, this was a most miserable and wretched year. I was almost always depressed, often felt heart-broken. I entirely lost any confidence in my own energies, and while I was deprived of the sources of pleasure which I had been used to derive from

reverie, I could acquire no new ones in the pursuits of those around me.

It was in this state of mind that, after a long and solitary walk, I found myself at a village which I had never before visited. On the skirts was a small Gothic building, beautiful and ancient. It was evening. The building was illuminated; the door open. I entered, and found myself in a Catholic church. A Lutheran in a Lutheran country, for a moment I trembled; but the indifference of my father on the subject of religion had prevented me at least from being educated a bigot; and, in my Venetian meditations, I would sometimes recollect that my mother must have professed the old faith.

The church was not very full; groups were kneeling in several parts. All was dusk except at the high altar. There, a priest in a flaming vest officiated, and ever and anon a kneeling boy, in a scarlet dress, rang a small and musical silver bell. Many tall white candles, in golden sticks, illuminated the sacred table, redolent of perfumes and adorned with flowers. Six large burnished lamps were suspended above, and threw a magical light upon a magical picture. It was a Magdalen kneeling and weeping in a garden. Her long golden hair was drawn off her ivory forehead, and reached to the ground. Her large blue eyes, full of ecstatic melancholy, pierced to heaven, while the heavy tears studded like pearls her wan but delicate cheek. Her clasped hands embraced a crucifix.

I gazed upon this pictured form with a strange fascination. I came forward, and placed myself near the altar. At that moment the organ burst forth, as if heaven were opening; clouds of incense rose and wreathed around the rich and vaulted roof; the priest advanced, and revealed a God, which I fell down and worshipped. From that moment I became a Catholic.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE was a mystery in the secret creed full of delight. Another link, too, seemed broken in the chain that bound me to the country which each day I more detested. Adoration also was ever a resource teeming with rapture, for a creed is imagination. The Magdalen succeeded to Christiana and to Egeria. Each year my mistress seemed to grow more spiritual—first reality, then fancy, now pure spirit: a beautiful woman, a mystical nymph, a canonised soul. How was this to end? Perhaps I was ultimately designed for

angelic intercourse, perhaps I might mount the skies with the presiding essence of a star.

My great occupations were devout meditation and solitary prayer. I inflicted upon myself many penances. I scrupulously observed every fast. My creative power was exercised in the production of celestial visitants; my thirst for expression gratified in infinite invocation. Wherever I moved I perceived the flashing of a white wing, the streaming of radiant air; however I might apparently be employed, I was, in fact, pondering over the music of my next supplication.

One mundane desire alone mingled with these celestial aspirations, and in a degree sprang out of their indulgence. Each day I languished more for Italy. It was a strong longing. Nothing but the liveliness of my faith could have solaced and supported me under the want of its gratification. I pined for the land where the true religion flourished in becoming glory, the land where I should behold temples worthy of the beautiful mysteries which were celebrated within their sumptuous walls, the land which the Vicar of God and the Ruler of Kings honoured and sanctified by his everlasting presence. A pilgrimage to Rome occupied my thoughts.

My favourite retreat now, when at the college, was to the ruins of a Gothic abbey, whither an hour's stroll easily carried me. It pleased me much to sit among these beautiful relics, and call back the days when their sanctity was undefiled, and their loveliness unimpaired. As I looked upon the rich framework of the eastern window, my fancy lent perfection to its shattered splendour. I beheld it once more beaming with its saints and martyrs, and radiant with chivalric blazonry. My eye wandered down the mouldering cloisters. I pictured a procession of priests solemnly advancing to the high altar and blending in sacred melody, with their dark garments and their shining heads, elevating a golden and gigantic crosier, and waving on high a standard of Madonna.

One day as I was indulging in these soothing visions I heard a shout, and looking around, I observed a man seated at no great distance, who by his action had evidently called to me. I arose, and coming out of the ruins advanced to him. He was seated on a mass of ancient brick-work, and appeared to be sketching. He was a tall man, fair and blue-eyed, but very sun-burnt. He was hawk-nosed, with a quick glancing vision, and there was an air of acuteness in his countenance which was very striking. His dress was not the dress of our country, but I was particularly pleased with his cap, which was of crimson cloth, with a broad border of fur, and fell on one side of his head like a cap in a picture.

"My little man," said he in a brisk clear voice, "I am sorry to

disturb you, but as probably you know this place better than I, you can, perhaps, tell me whether there be a spring at hand."

"Indeed, sir, a very famous one, for I have often drunk its water, which is most sweet, and clear, and cold; and if you will permit me, I will lead you to it."

"With all my heart, and many thanks, my little friend." So saying he rose, and, placing his portfolio under one arm, lifted up a knapsack, which I offered to carry.

"By no means, kind sir," said he in a most cheerful voice, "I am ever my own servant."

So leading him on round the other side of the abbey, and thence through a small but very fragrant mead, I brought him to the spring of which I had spoken. Over it was built a small but fair arch, the key-stone being formed of a mitred escutcheon, and many parts very much covered with thick ivy.

The eye of the stranger kindled with pleasure when he looked upon the arch; and then, sitting down upon the bank and opening his knapsack, he took out a large loaf and broke it, and as I was retiring he said, "Prithee do not go my little friend, but stop and share my meal. It is rough, but there is plenty. Nay, refuse not, little gentleman, for I wish to prolong our acquaintance. In not more than as many minutes you have conferred upon me two favours. In this world such characters are rare. You have given me that which I love better than wine, and you have furnished me with a divine sketch—for indeed this arch is of a finer style than any part of the great building, and must have been erected by an abbot of grand taste, I warrant you. Come, little gentleman, eat, prithee eat."

"Indeed, sir, I am not hungry; but if you would let me look at your drawing of the abbey, I should be most delighted."

"What, dost love art? What! have I stumbled upon a little artist!"

"No, sir, I cannot draw, nor indeed do I understand art, but I love everything which is beautiful."

"Ah! a comprehensive taste," and he gave me the portfolio.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "how beautiful!" for the drawing turned out, not as I had anticipated, a lean skeleton pencil sketch, but one rapidly and richly coloured. The abbey rose as in reality, only more beautiful, being suffused with a warm light, for he had dashed in it a sunset full of sentiment.

"Oh! sir, how beautiful! I could look at it for ever. It seems to me that some one must come forth from the pass of those blue mountains. Cannot you fancy some bright cavalier, sir, with a flowing plume, or even a string of mules,—even that would be delicious?"

"Bravo! bravo! my little man," exclaimed the stranger shooting a sharp scrutinising side glance. "You deserve to see sketches. There! undo that strap and open the folio, for there are many others, and some which may please you more."

I opened it as if I were about to enter a sanctuary. It was very full. I culled a drawing which appeared the most richly coloured, as one picks the most glowing fruit. There seemed a river, and many marble palaces on each side, and long, thin, gliding boats shooting in every part, and over the stream there sprang a bridge, a bridge with a single arch, an ancient and solemn bridge, covered with buildings. I gazed upon the scene for a moment with breathless interest, a tear of agitating pleasure stole down my cheek, and then I shouted, "Venice! Venice!"

"Little man," said the stranger, "what is the matter?"

"Oh! sir, I beg your pardon, you must think me very foolish indeed. I am sure I did not mean to call out, but I have been longing all my life to go to Venice, and when I see anything connected with it, I feel, sir, quite agitated. Your drawing, sir, is so beautiful, that I know not how—I thought for a moment that I was really looking upon these beautiful palaces, and crossing this famous Rialto."

"Never apologise for showing feeling my friend. Remember that when you do so you apologise for truth. I, too, am fond of Venice; nor is there any city where I have made more drawings."

"What, sir, have you been at Venice?"

"Is that so strange a deed! I have been in much stranger places."

"Oh; sir, how happy you must be! To see Venice, and to travel in distant countries, I think I could die as the condition of such enjoyment."

"You know as yet too little of life to think of death," said the stranger.

"Alas, sir," I mournfully sighed, "I have often wished to die."

"But can one so young be unhappy?" asked the stranger.

"Oh! sir, most—most unhappy. I am alone supported in this world by a fervent persuasion, that the holy Magdalen has condescended to take me under her especial protection."

"The holy Magdalen!" exclaimed the stranger with an air of great astonishment; "indeed! and what made you unhappy before the holy Magdalen condescended to take you under her especial protection? Do you think, or has anybody told you that you have committed any sin?"

"No! sir, my life has been, I hope, very innocent; nor do I see indeed, how I could commit any sin, for I have never been subject to any temptation. But I have ever been unhappy, because I am

perplexed about myself. I feel that I am not like other persons, and that which makes them happy is to me a source of no enjoyment."

"But you have, perhaps, some sources of enjoyment which are peculiar to yourself, and not open to them. Come, tell me how you have passed your life. Indeed, you have excited my curiosity; for I observed to-day, while I was drawing, that you were a good four hours reclining in the same position."

"Four hours, sir! I thought that I had been there but a few minutes."

"Four hours by the sun, as well as by this watch. What were you doing? Were you thinking of the blessed Magdalen?"

"No, sir!" I gravely replied, "not to-day."

"How then?"

"Indeed, sir," I answered, reddening, "if I tell you, I am afraid you will think me very foolish."

"Speak out, little man. We are all very foolish; and I have a suspicion, that if we understood each other better you might perhaps turn out the least foolish of the two. Open then your mind and fear nothing. For believe me, it is dishonourable to blush when you speak the truth, even if it be to your shame."

There was something in the appearance and manner of the stranger that greatly attracted me. I sought him with the same eagerness with which I always avoided my fellow creatures. From the first, conversation with him was no shock. His presence seemed to sanctify, instead of outraging my solitude. His voice subdued my sullen spirit, and called out my hidden nature. He inspired me not only with confidence, but even with a degree of fascinating curiosity.

"Indeed, sir," I began, still with a hesitating voice but a more assured manner, "indeed, sir, I have never spoken of these things to any one, for I feel they could not believe or comprehend what I would wish to express, nor, indeed, is it delightful to be laughed at. But know that I ever like to be alone, and it is this—that when I am alone, I can indulge in thought, which gives me great pleasure. For I would wish you to comprehend, sir, that I have ever lived in, as it were, two worlds—a public world and a private world. But I should not be unhappy in the private world but for one reason, which is nothing, but I was ever most happy; but in the public world I am indeed miserable. For you must know, sir, that when I am alone, my mind is full of what seem to me beautiful thoughts; nor indeed are they thoughts alone that make me so happy, but in truth, I perform many strange and noble acts, and these, too, in distant countries and in unknown places, and other persons appear and they also act. And we all speak in language more beautiful

than common words. And, sir, many other things occur which it would take long to recount, but which, indeed, I am sure, that is, I think, would make any one very happy."

"But all this is a source of happiness, not of unhappiness," said the stranger. "Am I to comprehend, then, that the source has dried up?"

"Oh! no, sir, for only this morning I had many visions, but I checked them."

"But why check them?"

"Ah! sir," I answered, heaving a deep sigh, "it is this which makes me unhappy, for when I enter into this private world, there arises in the end a desire to express what has taken place in it which indeed I cannot gratify."

The stranger for a moment mused. Then he suddenly said, "And when you looked upon my sketch of the abbey, there seemed to you a cavalier advancing, I think you said?"

"From the pass of the blue mountains, sir. Whenever I look upon pictures it is thus."

"And when you beheld the Rialto, tell me what occurred then?"

"There was a rush, sir, in my mind; and when my eye caught that tall young signor, who is stepping off the stairs of a palace into a gondola, I wished to write a tale of which he should be the hero."

"It appears to me, my young friend," said the stranger in a serious tone, and looking at me very keenly—"it appears to me, my young friend, that you are a poet."

"Alas, sir," I exclaimed, extremely agitated and nearly seizing his hand—"alas! alas! sir, I am not. For I once thought so myself and have often tried to write; and either I have not produced a line, or something so wretchedly flat and dull that even I have felt it intolerable. It is this that makes me so miserable—so miserable that, were it not for feeling in the most marked manner that I am under the especial protection of the blessed Magdalen, I think I should kill myself."

A gentle smile played upon the lip of the stranger, but it was in an instant suppressed. Then turning to me, he said, "Supposing a man were born with a predisposition for painting, as I might have been myself, and that he were enabled to fancy pictures in his eye, do you think that if he took up a brush for the first time he could transfer these pictures to the canvass?"

"By no means, sir, for the artist must learn his art."

"And is not a poet an artist, and is not writing an art equally with painting? Words are but chalk and colour. The painter and the poet must follow the same course. Both must alike study

before they execute. Both must alike consult Nature and invent the beautiful. Those who delineate inanimate Nature, and those who describe her, must equally study her, if they wish to excel in her own creations: and for man, if the painter study the outward form of the animal, the inward must be equally investigated by the poet. Thus far for the natural; and for the ideal, which is an improvement upon nature, and which you will some day more clearly comprehend, remember this, that the painter and the poet, however assisted by their own organisation, must alike perfect their style by the same process—I mean by studying the works themselves of great painters and great poets. See then, my young friend, how unreasonable you are, that, because you cannot be a great artist without studying your art, you are unhappy.”

“Oh, sir, indeed, indeed, I am not! There is no application, there is no exertion, I feel, I feel it strongly, of which I am not capable, to gain knowledge. Indeed, sir, you speak to me of great things, and my mind opens to your wisdom—but how am I to study?”

“Be not too rapid. Before we part, which will be in a moment, I will write you some talismanic rules which have been of great service to myself. I copied them off an obelisk amid the ruins of Thebes. They will teach you all that is now necessary.”

“Oh, sir, how good, how kind you are! How different would have been my life had I been taught by somebody like you.”

“Where, then, were you educated?”

“I am a student of the college about two miles off. Perhaps you may have passed it?”

“What, the large house upon the hill, where they learn words?” said the stranger with a smile.

“Indeed, sir, it is too true. For though it never occurred to me before, I see now why, with an ardent love of knowledge, I have indeed there gained nothing but an ill name.”

“And now,” said the stranger, rising, “I must away, for the sun will in a few minutes sink, and I have to reach a village, which is some miles off, for my night’s encampment.”

With a feeling of deep regret I beheld him prepare to depart. I dropped for a moment into profound abstraction; then, rushing to him, I seized his hand, and exclaimed, “Oh, sir, I am noble, and I am rich, yet let me follow you!”

“By no means,” said the stranger very good-naturedly, “for our professions are different.”

“Yet a poet should see all things.”

“Assuredly. And you, too, will wander, but your hour is not yet come.”

“And shall I ever see Venice?”

"I doubt not; for when a mind like yours thinks often of a thing, it will happen."

"You speak to me of mysteries."

"There is little mystery; there is much ignorance. Some day you will study metaphysics, and you will then understand the nature of volition."

He opened his knapsack and took out two small volumes, in one of which he wrote some lines. "This is the only book," he said, "I have with me, and as, like myself, you are such a strong Venetian, I will give it you, because you love art, and artists, and are a good boy. When we meet again I hope I may call you a great man."

"Here," he said, giving them to me, "they are full of Venice. Here, you see, is a view of the Rialto. This will delight you. And in the blank leaf I have written all the advice you at present require. Promise me, however, not to read it till you return to your college. And so farewell, my little man—farewell!"

He extended me his hand. I took it; and although it is an awkward thing at all times, and chiefly for a boy, I began telling him my name and condition, but he checked me. "I never wish to know anybody's name. Were I to become acquainted with every being who flits across me in life, the callousness of my heart would be endangered. If your acquaintance be worth preserving, fate or fortune will some day bring us again together."

He departed. I watched his figure until it melted in the rising haze of evening. It was strange the ascendancy that this man exercised over me. When he spoke I seemed listening to an oracle, and now that he had departed, I felt as if some supernatural visitant had disappeared.

I quickened my walk home from the intense anxiety to open the volume in which I was to find the talismanic counsel. When I had arrived, I read written in pencil these words:

"BE PATIENT: CHERISH HOPE. READ MORE: PONDER LESS. NATURE IS MORE POWERFUL THAN EDUCATION: TIME WILL DEVELOP EVERY THING. TRUST NOT OVERMUCH IN THE BLESSED MAGDALEN: LEARN TO PROTECT YOURSELF."

CHAPTER XIV.

INDEED I could think of nothing but the stranger. All night his image was before my eyes, and his voice sounded in my ear. I recalled each look, I repeated each expression. When I woke in the morning, the first thing I did was to pronounce from memory his oracular advice. I determined to be patient, I resolved never to despair. Reverie was no longer to be endured, and a book was to be ever in my hand.

He had himself enabled me to comply with this last rule. I seized the first opportunity to examine his present. It was the *History of Venice*, in French, by Amelot de la Houssaye—a real history of Venice, not one written years after the extinction of the Republic by some solemn sage, full of first principles and dull dissertations upon the vicious constitution—a prophet of the past, trying to shuffle off his commonplace deductions for authentic inspiration—but a history of Venice written by one who had witnessed the Doge sitting on his golden throne, and receiving awestruck ambassadors in his painted halls.

I read it with an avidity with which I had never devoured any book—some parts of it, indeed, with absolute rapture. When I came to the chapter upon the nobility, a dimness came over my sight: for a moment I could not proceed. I saw them all; I marked all the divisions; the great magnificoes, who ranked with crowned heads, the nobles of the war of Candia, and the third and still inferior class. I was so excited, that for a moment I did not observe that the name of Contarini did not appear. I looked for it with anxiety. But when I read that there were yet four families of such pre-eminent ancestry that they were placed even above the magnificoes, being reputed descendants of Roman Consular houses, and that of these the unrivalled race of Contarini was the chief, I dashed down the book in a paroxysm of nervous exultation, and rushed into the woods.

I ran about like a madman for some time, cutting down with a sharp stick the underwood that opposed my way, leaping trenches, hallooing, spouting, shouting, dashing through pools of water. At length I arrived at a more open part of the wood. At a slight distance was a hill. I rushed on up the hill, and never stopped till I had gained the summit. That steep ascent a little tamed me. I found myself upon a great ridge, and a vast savage view opened upon all sides. I felt now more at ease, for the extent of the prospect harmonised with the largeness and swell of my soul.

"Ha ha!" I cried like a wild horse. I snorted in the air, my eye sparkled, my crest rose. I waved my proud arm. "Ha ha! have I found it out at last! I knew there was something. Nature whispered it to me, and time has revealed it. He said truly, time has developed everything. But shall these feelings subside into poetry? Away! give me a sword. My consular blood demands a sword. Give me a sword, ye winds, ye trees, ye mighty hills, ye deep cold waters, give me a sword. I will fight! by heavens, I will fight! I will conquer. Why am I not a Doge? A curse upon the tyranny of man, why is our Venice not free? By the God of heaven I will be a Doge! O, thou fair and melancholy saint!" I continued, falling on my knees, "who in thy infinite goodness condescendedst, as it were, to come down from heaven to call me back to the true and holy faith of Venice, and to take me under thy especial protection, blessed and beautiful Mary Magdalen, look down from thy glorious seat above, and smile upon thy elected and favourite child!"

I rose up refreshed by this short prayer, calmer and cooler, and began to meditate upon what was now fitting to be done. That Contarini Fleming must with all possible despatch cease to be a schoolboy was indeed evident, necessary, and indispensable. The very idea of the great house upon the hill, where they teach words, was ludicrous. Nor, indeed, would it become me ever again, under any pretence whatever, to acknowledge a master, or, as it would appear, to be subject to any laws, save the old laws of Venice, for I claimed for myself the rights and attributes of a Venetian noble of the highest class, and they were those pertaining to blood royal. But when I called to my recollection the cold, worldly, practical character of my father, the vast quantity of dull, lowering, entangling ties that formed the great domestic mesh, and bound me to a country which I detested, covered me with a climate which killed me, surrounded me with manners with which I could not sympathise, and duties which Nature impelled me not to fulfil,—I felt that, to ensure my emancipation, it was necessary at once to dissolve all ties of blood and affection, and to break away from those links which chained me as a citizen to a country which I abhorred. I resolved, therefore, immediately to set out for Venice. I was for the moment, I conceived, sufficiently well supplied with money, for I possessed one hundred rix-dollars, more than any five of my fellow students together. This, with careful husbandry, I counted would carry me to the nearest sea-port, perhaps even secure me a passage. And for the rest, I had a lively conviction that something must always turn up to assist me in any difficulties, for I was convinced that I was a hero, and heroes are never long forlorn.

On the next morning, therefore, long ere the sun had risen, I

commenced my adventures. I did not steal away. First I kissed a cross three times which I carried next to my breast, and then recommending myself to the blessed Magdalen, I walked off proudly and slowly, in a manner becoming Coriolanus or Cæsar, who, after some removes, were both of them, for aught I knew, my great-grandfathers. I carried in a knapsack, which we used for our rambles, a few shirts, my money, a pair of pocket pistols, and some ammunition. Nor did I forget a large loaf of bread—not very heroic food, but classical in my sight, from being the victual of the mysterious stranger. Like him, also, I determined in future only to drink water.

CHAPTER XV.

I JOURNEYED for some hours without stopping, along a road about which all I knew was, that it was opposite to the one which had first carried me to the college, and consequently, I supposed, did not lead home. I never was so delighted in my life. I had never been up so early in my life. It was like living in a new world. Everything was still, fresh, fragrant. I wondered how long it would last, how long it would be before the vulgar day, to which I had been used, would begin. At last a soft luminous appearance commenced in the horizon, and gradually gathered in strength and brightness. Then it shivered into brilliant streaks, the clouds were dappled with rich flaming tints, and the sun rose. I felt grateful when his mild but vivifying warmth fell upon my face, and it seemed to me that I heard the sound of trumpets when he came forth, like a royal hero, out of his pavilion.

All the birds began singing, and the cocks crowed with renewed pride. I felt as if I myself could sing, my heart was so full of joy and exultation. And now I heard many pleasant rural sounds. A horse neighed, and a whip smacked; there was a whistle, and the sound of a cart wheel. I came to a large farm-house. I felt as if I were indeed travelling, and seeing the world and its wonders. When I had rambled about before I had never observed anything, for I was full of nonsensical ideas. But now I was a practical man, and felt capable, as the stranger said, of protecting myself. Never was I so cheerful.

There was a great barking, and several dogs rushed out at me, all very fierce, but I hit the largest over the nose with my stick, and it retreated yelping into the yard, where it again barked most

furiously behind the gate; the smaller dogs were so frightened that they slunk away immediately, through different hedges, nor did they bark again till I passed the gate, but I heard them then, though very feeble, and rather snappish than fierce.

The farmer was coming out of the gate, and saluted me. I returned him the salute with a firm voice and a manly air. He spoke then of the weather, and I differed from him, to show that I was a thinking being, and capable of protecting myself. I made some inquiries respecting the distance of certain places, and I acquired from him much information. The nearest town was fifteen miles off. This I wished to reach by night, as there was no great village, and this I doubted not to do.

When the heat increased, and I felt a little fatigued, I stopped at a beautiful spring, and taking my loaf out of my knapsack like the stranger, I ate with a keen relish, and slaked my slight thirst in the running water. It was the coldest and the purest water that I had ever tasted. I felt quite happy, and was full of confidence and self-gratulation at my prosperous progress. I reposed here till noon, and as the day, though near midsummer, became cloudy, I then recommenced my journey without dread of the heat.

On I went, full of hope. The remembrance of the cut that I had given the great dog over the nose had wonderfully inflamed my courage. I longed to knock down a man. Every step was charming. Every flower, every tree, gave me delight, which they had not before yielded. Sometimes, yet seldom, for it was an unfrequented road, I met a traveller, and always prepared myself for an adventure. It did not come, but there was yet time. Every person I saw, and every place I observed, seemed strange and new: I felt in a far land. And for adventures, my own consciousness was surely a sufficient one, for was I not a nobleman incognito, going on a pilgrimage to Venice? To say nothing of the adventures that might then occur; here were materials for the novelist! Pah! my accursed fancy was again wandering. I forgot that I was no longer a poet, but something which, though difficult to ascertain, I doubted not in the end all would agree to be infinitely greater.

As the afternoon advanced the thin grey clouds melted away, the sun mildly shone in the warm light blue sky. This was again fortunate, and instead of losing my gay heart with the decline of day, I felt inspired with fresh vigour, and shot on joyous and full of cheerfulness. The road now ran through the skirts of a forest. It was still less like a common-place journey. On each side was a large plot of turf, green and sweet. Seated on this, at some little distance, I perceived a group of men and women. My heart beat at the prospect of an incident. I soon observed them with more

advantage. Two young women were seated together repairing a bright garment, which greatly excited my wonder. It seemed of very fine stuff, and richly embroidered with gold and silver. Greatly it contrasted with their own attire and that of their companions, which was plain and, indeed, shabby. As they worked one of them burst into repeated fits of laughter, but the other was more sedulous, and, looking grave, seemed to reprove her. A man was feeding with sticks a fire, over which boiled a great pot; a middle-aged woman was stirring its contents. A young man was lying asleep upon the grass; an older one was furbishing up a sword. A lightly built but large wagon was on the other side of the road, the unharnessed horses feeding on the grass.

A little dog shrilly barked when I came up, but I was not afraid of dogs; I flourished my stick, and the laughing girl called out "Harlequin," and the cur ran to her. I stopped and inquired of the fire-lighter the distance to the town where I hoped to sleep. Not only did he not answer me, but he did not even raise up his head. It was the first time in my life that I had not obtained an answer. I was astonished at his insolence. "Sir," I said, in a tone of offended dignity, "how long is it since you have learnt not to answer the inquiry of a gentleman?"

The laughing girl burst into a renewed fit. All stopped their pursuits. The fire-lighter looked up with a puzzled sour face, the old woman stared with her mouth open, and the furbisher ran up to us with his naked weapon. He had the oddest and most comical face that I had ever seen. It was like that of a seal, but full of ludicrous mobility. He came rushing up, saying with an air and voice of mock heroism, "To arms, to arms!"

I was astonished, and caught the eye of the laughing girl. She was very fair, with a small nose, and round cheeks breaking into charming dimples. When I caught her eye she made a wild grimace at me, and I also laughed. Although I was trudging along with a knapsack my dress did not befit my assumed character, and, in a moment of surprise, I had given way to a manner which still less became my situation. Women are quicker than men in judging of strangers. The two girls were evidently my friends from the first, and the fair laughter beckoned me to come and sit down by her. This gay wench had wonderfully touched my fancy. I complied with her courteous offer without hesitation. I threw away my knapsack and my stick, and stretched my legs with the air of a fine gentleman. I was already ashamed of my appearance, and forgot everything in the desire to figure to the best advantage to my new friend. "This is the first time," I drawled out with a languid air, and looking in her face, "this is the first time in my life that I ever walked, and I am heartily sick of it."

"And why have you walked, and where have you come from, and where are you going to?" she eagerly demanded.

"I was tired to death of riding every day of my life," I rejoined, with the tone of a man who had exhausted pleasure. "I am not going anywhere, and I forget where I came from."

"Oh, you odd thing!" said the wench, and she gave me a pinch.

The other girl, who was handsome, but dark, and of a more serious beauty, at this moment rose, and went and spoke to the crusty fire-lighter. When she returned she seated herself on my other side; so I was now between the two: but as she seated herself, though doubtless unconsciously, she pressed my hand in a sentimental manner.

"And what is your name?" asked the laughing girl.

"Theodora! how can you be so rude?" remarked the serious beauty.

"Do you know," said the laughing girl, whispering in my ear, "I think you must be a little count."

I only smiled in answer, but it was a smile which complimented her penetration.

"And now may I ask who you may be, and whither you may be going?"

"We are going to the next town," replied the serious beauty, "where, if we find the public taste not disinclined, we hope to entertain them with some representations."

"You are actors then. What a charming profession! How I love the theatre! When I am at home I go in my father's box every night. I have often wished to be an actor."

"Be one," said the serious beauty, pressing my hand.

"Join us," said the laughing girl, pinching my elbow.

"Why not?" I replied, and almost thought. "Youth must be passed in adventure."

The fair nymph produced a box of sugar-plums, and taking out a white almond, kissed it, and pushed it into my mouth. While I laughed at her wild kitten-like action, the dark girl drew a deep-coloured rose from her bosom, and pressed it to my nose. I was nearly stifled with their joint sweets and kindness. Neither of them would take away their hands. The dark girl pressed her rose with increased force; the sugar-plum melted away; but I found in my mouth the tip of a little finger scarcely larger, and as white and sweet. There was giggling without end; I sank down upon my back. The dark girl snatched a hasty embrace—her companion fell down by my side, and bit my cheek.

"You funny little count!" said the fair beauty.

"I shall keep these in remembrance of a happy moment," said her friend, with a sentimental air; and she glanced at me with her

flashing eye. So saying, she picked up the scattered leaves of the rose.

"And I! am I to have nothing?" exclaimed the blue-eyed girl, with an air of mock sadness; and she crossed her arms upon her lap with a drooping head.

I took a light iron chain from my neck, and threw it over hers. "There," I said, "Miss Sugar-plum, that is for you."

She jumped up from the ground, and bounded about as if she were the happiest of creatures, laughing without end, and kissing the slight gift. The dark girl rose and began to dance, full of grace and expression; Sugar-plum joined her, and they fell into one of their stage figures. The serious beauty strove to excel, and indeed was the greater artist of the two; but there was a wild grace about her companion which pleased me most.

"Can you dance, little count?" she cried.

"I am too tired," I answered.

"Nay, then, another day; for it is pleasant to look forward to frolic."

The man with the odd face now advanced towards me. He fell into ridiculous attitudes. I thought that he would never have finished his multiplied reverences. Every time he bowed he saluted me with a new form of visage; it was the most ludicrous medley of pomposity, and awkwardness, and humour. I thought that I had never seen such a droll person, and was myself a little impregnated with his oddity. I also made him a bow with assumed dignity, and then he became more subdued.

"Sir," said he, placing his huge hand upon his breast, and bowing nearly to the ground—"I assure you, sir, indeed, sir—the greatest honour, sir, your company—a very great honour indeed."

"I am equally sensible of the honour," I replied, "and think myself most fortunate to have found so many and such agreeable friends."

"The greatest honour indeed, sir—very sensible, sir—always sensible, sir."

He stopped, and I again returned his reverence, but this time without speaking.

"The greatest liberty, sir—never take liberties—but fear you will consider it a very great liberty—a very great liberty indeed, sir."

"Indeed I shall consider myself very fortunate to comply with any wish that you can express."

"Oh, sir, you are too kind!—always are kind, have no doubt—no doubt at all, sir; but our meal, sir—our humble meal—very humble indeed—we venture to request the honour, your company, sir;" and he pronounced the last and often-repeated monosyllable with a renewed reverence.

"Indeed I fear that I have already too much and too long intruded."

"Oh come! pray come!" and each girl seized an arm, and led me to their banquet.

I sat down between my two friends. The fire-lighter, who was the manager, and indeed proprietor of the whole concern, now received me with great courtesy. When they were all seated, they called several times, "Frederick! Frederick!" and then the young man who was on the ground jumped up and seated himself. He was not ill-looking, but I did not like the expression of his face. His countenance and his manner seemed to me vulgar. I took rather a prejudice against him. Nor, indeed, did my appearance seem much to please him, for he stared at me not very courteously; and when the manager mentioned that I was a young gentleman travelling, who had done them the honour to join their repast, he said nothing.

The repast was not very humble. There was plenty to eat. While the manager helped the soup they sat very quiet and demure; perhaps my presence slightly restrained them; even the laughing girl was for a moment calm. I had a keen appetite, and, though I at first from shame restrained it, I played my part well. The droll carved a great joint of boiled meat. I thought I should have died; he seldom spoke, but his look made us all full of merri-ment; even the young man sometimes smiled.

"We prefer living in this way to sojourning in dirty inns," said the manager, with an air of dignity.

"You are quite right," I replied; "I desire nothing better than to live always so."

"Inns are indeed wretched things," said the old mother. "How extravagantly they charge for what costs them in a manner nothing!"

Wine was now produced. The manager filled a cup and handed it to me. I was just going to observe that I drank only water, when Sugar-plum, first touching it with her lips, placed it in my hand, and, pledging them all, I drank it off.

"You are eating rough fare," said the old mother; "but you are welcome."

"I never enjoyed anything so much in my life," I truly replied. "How I envy you all the happy life you lead!"

"Before you style it happy you should have experienced it," remarked Frederick.

"What you say is in part true; but if a person have imagination, experience appears to me of little use, since both are means by which we can equally arrive at knowledge."

"I know nothing about imagination," said the young man;

"but what I know I owe to experience. It may not have taught me as much as imagination has taught you."

"Experience is everything," said the old mother, shaking her head.

"It sometimes costs dear," said the manager.

"Terrible, terrible," observed the droll, with a most sad and solemn shake of the head, and lifting up his hands. I burst into a fit of laughter, and poured down another draught of wine.

Conversation now became more brisk, and I took more than my share of it; but I being new, they all wished me to talk. I got very much excited by my elocution, as much as by the wine. I discoursed upon acting, which I pronounced to be one of the first and finest of arts. I treated this subject, indeed, very deeply, and in a spirit of æsthetical criticism with which they seemed unacquainted, and a little surprised.

"Should we place it," I asked, "before painting?"

"Before scene-painting certainly," said the droll, in a hoarse, thick voice; "for it naturally takes its place there."

"I never knew but one painter," said the old mother, "and therefore I cannot give an opinion."

The manager was quite silent.

"All employments are equally disgusting," said the young man.

"On further reflection," I continued, "it appears to me that if we examine"—But here the white girl pinched me so severely under the table that I could not contain myself, and I was obliged to call out. All stared, and she looked quite demure, as if nothing had happened.

After this all was merriment, fun, and frolic. The girls pelted the droll with plums, and he unfurled an umbrella to protect himself. I assisted them in the attack. The young man lighted his pipe and walked off. The old mother in vain proclaimed silence. I had taken too much wine, and for the first time in my life. All of a sudden I felt the trees dancing and whirling round. I took another bumper to set myself right. In a few minutes I fell down quite flat, and remember nothing more.

CHAPTER XVI.

"I MUST get out. I am so hot."

"You shall not," said Thalia.

"I must, I must. I am so very hot."

"Will you desert me!" exclaimed Melpomene.

"Oh! how hot I am. Pray let me out."

"No one can get out at night," said the dark girl earnestly, and in a significant voice, which intimated to her companion to take up the parable.

"No, indeed," said her friend.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because it is a rule. The manager will not permit it."

"Confound the manager! What is he to me? I will get out."

"Oh! what a regular little count," said Thalia.

"Let me out, let me out. I never was so hot in my life."

"Hush! hush! or you will wake them."

"If you do not let me out I will scream."

The manager and the droll were in the fore part of the wagon affecting to drive, but they were both asleep. The old mother was snoring behind them. They had put me in the back part of the wagon with my two friends.

"Let him out, Theodora," for the other was afraid of a contention.

"Never," said Theodora, and she embraced me with increased energy. My legs were in the other girl's lap. I began to kick and struggle.

"Oh! you naughty little count," said one.

"Is this the return for all our love!" exclaimed the other.

"I will get out, and there is an end of it. I must have some air. I must stretch my legs. Let me out at once, or I will wake them all."

"Let him out, Theodora."

"He is certainly the wickedest little count; but promise you will come back in five minutes."

"Anything—I will promise anything: only let me out."

They unbolted the back of the wagon; the fresh air came in. They shivered, but I felt it delightful.

"Farewell, dearest," exclaimed Melpomene; "one parting embrace. How heavily will the moments roll until we again meet!"

"Adieu, count," said Thalia; "and remember you are to come back in five minutes."

I jumped into the road. It was a clear, sharp night, the stars shining very brightly. The young man was walking behind, wrapped up in a great cloak, and smoking his pipe. He came up and, with more courtesy than he had hitherto shown, assisted me in shutting the door and asked if I would try a cigar.

I declined his offer, and for some little way we walked on in silence. I felt unwell; my head ached; my mouth was parched. I was conscious that I had exposed myself. I had commenced the

morning by vowing that I would only drink water, and for the first time in my life I had got tipsy with wine. I had committed many other follies, and altogether felt much less like a hero. I recalled all my petty vanity and childish weaknesses with remorse. Imagination was certainly not such a sure guide as experience. Was it possible that one, who had already got into such scrapes, could really achieve his great purpose? My conduct and my situation were assuredly neither of them Roman.

As I walked on the fresh air did its kind office. My head was revived by my improved circulation; my companion furnished me with an excellent draught of water. Hope did not quite desert my invigorated frame. I began to turn in my mind how I might yet prosper.

"I feel better," I said to my companion, with a feeling of gratitude.

"Ay! ay! that wagon is enough to make any one ill, at least any one accustomed to a more decent conveyance. I never enter it. To say nothing of their wine, which is indeed intolerable to those who may have tasted a fair glass in the course of this sad life.

"You find life, then, sad?" I inquired with a mixed feeling of curiosity and sympathy.

"He who knows life will hardly style it joyous."

"Ah, ah!" I thought to myself, "here is some chance of philosophical conversation. Perhaps I have found another stranger, who can assist me in self-knowledge." I began to think that I was exceedingly wrong in entertaining a prejudice against this young man; and in a few minutes I had settled that his sullen conduct was the mark of a superior mind, and that he himself must be an interesting personage.

"I have found life very gloomy myself," I rejoined; "but I think it arises from our faulty education. We are taught words and not ideas."

"There is something in that," said the young man thoughtfully.

"After all, perhaps, it is best to be patient, and cherish hope."

"Doubtless," said the young man.

"And I think it equally true, that we should read more and ponder less."

"Oh! curse reading," said my friend; "I never could read."

"You have like myself, then, indulged in your own thoughts?"

"Always," he affirmed.

"Ah! indeed, my dear friend, there is after all nothing like it. Let them say what they will, but give me the glorious pleasures of my private world, and all the jarring horrors of a public one I leave without regret to those more fitted to struggle with them."

"I believe that most public men are scoundrels," said the young man.

"It is their education," I rejoined, although I did not clearly detect the connexion of his remark. "What can we expect?"

"No, sir, it is corruption," he replied, in a firm tone.

"Pray," said I, leading back the conversation to a point which I more fully comprehended, "is it your opinion that nature is stronger than education?"

"Why," said my friend, taking a good many whiffs of his pipe, "there is a great deal to be said on both sides."

"One of the wisest and most extraordinary men I ever knew, however, was of a decided opinion that nature would ultimately prevail."

"Who might he be?" asked my companion.

"Why really his name—but it is a most extraordinary adventure, and to this hour I cannot help half believing that he was a supernatural being; but the truth is I do not know his name, for I met him casually and under very peculiar circumstances; and though we conversed much, and of very high matters, he did not, unfortunately, favour me with his name."

"That certainly looks odd," said Mr. Frederick; "for when a man sheers off without giving his name, I, for one, never think him better than he should be."

"Had he not spoken of the blessed Magdalen in a way which I can scarcely reconcile with his other sentiments, I should certainly have considered him a messenger from that holy personage, for I have the best reasons for believing that I am under her especial protection."

"If he abused her, that could scarcely be," remarked Frederick.

"No. Certainly I think he must have been only a man; for he presented me with a gift before his departure——"

"That was handsome."

"And I can hardly believe that he was really deputed—though I really do not know. Everything seems mysterious; although I believe, after all, there is little mystery, but, on the contrary, much ignorance."

"No doubt: though they are opening schools now in every parish."

"And how much did he give you?" continued Frederick.

"How much! I do not understand you."

"I mean, what did he give you?"

"A most delightful book, to me particularly interesting."

"A book!"

"A book which I shall no doubt find of great use in my travels."

"I have myself some thoughts of travelling," said Frederick

"for I am sick of this life, which is ill-suited to my former habits, but one gets into scrapes without thinking of it."

"One does in a most surprising manner." I never made an observation in a tone of greater sincerity.

"You have led a very different sort of life then?" I asked. "To tell you the truth, I thought so. You could not disguise from me that you were superior to your appearance. I suppose, like myself, you are incog.?"

"That is the exact truth."

"Good heavens! how lucky it is that we have met! Do not you think that we could contrive to travel together? What are your plans?"

"Why, to say truth, I care little where I go. It is necessary that I should travel about for some time, and see the world, until my father, the count, is reconciled."

"You have quarrelled with your father?"

"Do not speak of it. It is a sad affair. But I hope that it will end well. Time will show."

"Time, indeed, develops everything."

"I hope everything from my mother the countess' influence; but I cannot bear speaking about it. I am supported now by my sister Lady Caroline, out of her own allowance, too, poor creature. There is nothing like those sisters." And he raised his hand to his face, and would have brushed away the tear that nearly started from his manly eye.

I was quite affected. I respected his griefs, and would not press him for details. I exhorted him to take courage.

"Ay! ay! it is very easy talking; but when a man, accustomed to the society and enjoyments I have been, finds himself wandering about the world in this manner—it is very easy to talk—but curse it—do not let us speak of it. And now where do you intend to go?"

"I am thinking of Venice."

"Venice! just the place I should like to see. But that requires funds. You are very welcome to share mine as far as they will last; but have you anything yourself?"

"I have one hundred rix-dollars," I replied; "not too much certainly, but I quitted home without notice. You understand."

"Oh, yes! I have done these things myself. At your age I was just such a fellow as you are. A hundred rix-dollars!—not too much to be sure, but with what I have got it will do. I scorn to leave a companion in distress like you. Let me be shivered if I would not share the last farthing with the fellow I liked."

"You shall never repent, sir, your kindness to me: of that feel assured. The time may come when I may be enabled to yield you assistance, nor shall it be wanting."

We now began seriously to consult over our plans. He recommended an immediate departure even that night, or else, as he justly remarked, I should get perhaps entangled with these girls. I objected to quitting so unceremoniously, and without thanking my kind friends for their hospitality, and making some little present to the worthy manager; but he said that that worthy manager already owed him a year's salary, and therefore I need not be anxious on his account. Hamburg, according to him, was the port to which we must work our way, and, indeed, our departure must not be postponed an hour, for, luckily for us, the next turning was the route to Hamburg. I was delighted to find for a friend such a complete man of the world, and doubted not, under his auspices, most prosperously to achieve my great object.

CHAPTER XVII.

"HERE is your knapsack. I woke the girls getting it. They thought it was you, and would have given me more kind words and kisses than I care for. Theodora laughed heartily when she found out her mistake, but Emilia was in a great rage."

"Good-natured lasses! I think I must give them a parting embrace."

"Pooh! pooh! that will spoil all. Think of Venice. I cannot get at my portmanteau. Never mind, it matters little. I always carry my money about me. We must make some sacrifices, and we shall get on the better for it, for I can now carry our provisions; and yet my ribbon of the order of the Fox is there—pah! I will not think of it. See! here runs the Hamburg road. Cheerily, boy, and good-bye to the old wagon."

He hurried me along. I had no time to speak.

We pushed on with great spirit, the road again entering the forest, on the skirts of which I had been the whole day journeying.

"I know this country well," said Frederick, "for in old days I have often hunted here with my father's hounds. I can make many a short cut that will save us much. Come along down this glade: We are making fine way."

We continued in this forest several hours, walking with great speed. I was full of hope, and confidence, and self-congratulation, that I had found such a friend. He took the whole management upon himself, always decided upon our course, never lost his readi-

ness. I had no care, the brisk exercise prevented me from feeling wearied. We never stopped.

The morning broke, and gave me fresh courage. The sun rose, and it was agreeable to think that I was still nearer Venice. We came to a pleasant piece of turf, fresh from the course of a sparkling rivulet.

"We have gone as good as thirty miles," said Frederick. "Had we kept to the common road we should have got through barely half."

"Have we, indeed!" I said. "This is indeed progress; but there is nothing like willing hearts. May we get on as well each day!"

"Here I propose to rest awhile," said my companion; "a few hours' repose will bring us quite round. You must not forget that you rather debauched yesterday."

Now that I had stopped I indeed felt wearied and exceedingly sleepy. My companion kindly plucked some fern, and made me an excellent bed under a branching tree.

"This is, indeed, a life of adventure," I said. "How very kind you are. Such a bed in such a scene would alone repay for all our fatigue."

He produced some bread and a bottle, and gathered some cresses; but I felt no desire to eat or drink, and before he had finished his meal I had sunk into a deep slumber.

I must have slept many hours, for when I woke it was much past noon. I arose wonderfully refreshed. I looked round for Frederick, but, to my surprise, he was not there. I jumped up, and called his name. No answer. I became alarmed, and ran about the vicinity of our encampment, shouting "Frederick!" There was still no answer. Suddenly I observed that my knapsack also was gone. A terrible feeling of doubt, or rather dismay, came over me. I sank down and buried my face in my hands, and it was some minutes before I could even think.

"Can it be! It is impossible! Infamous knave, or, rather, miserable ass! Have I been deceived, entrapped, plundered! O, Contarini, Contarini, you are at length punished for all your foolery! Frederick, Frederick! he cannot surely have left me. He is joking, he is trying to frighten me. I will not believe that I have been deceived. He must be trying to frighten me. I will not appear frightened. I will not shout in the least. Ah! I think I see him behind that tree." I jumped up again and ran to the tree, but there was no Frederick. I ran about, in turn shouting his name, execrating my idiocy, confiding in his good faith, proclaiming him a knave. An hour, a heavy but agitating hour, rolled away before I was convinced of the triumph of experience over imagination.

I was hungry, I was destitute, I was in a wild and unknown solitude; I might be starved, I might be murdered, I might die. I could think of nothing but horrible events. I felt for the first time in my life like a victim. I could not bear to recal my old feelings. They were at once maddening and mortifying. I felt myself, at the same time, the most miserable and the most contemptible of beings. I entirely lost all my energy. I believed that all men were villains. I sank upon the ground and gave myself up to despair. In a word, I was fairly frightened.

I heard a rustling in a neighbouring copse and darted up. I thought it was Frederick. It was not Frederick, but it was a human being. An ancient woodman came forth from a grove of oaks, a comely and venerable man. His white hair, his fresh, hale face, his still, keen eye, and the placid, benignant expression of his countenance, gave me hope. I saluted him, and told him my story. My appearance, my streaming eyes, my visible emotion, were not lost upon him. Sharply he scrutinised me, many were the questions he asked, but he finally credited my tale. I learnt from him that during the night I had advanced into the interior of the forest, that he himself lived in a cottage on its skirts some miles off, that he was about to return from his daily labour, and that I should accompany him. As for the road to Hamburg, that was a complete invention. I also collected that home as well as the college were very distant.

We proceeded together along a turf road, with his donkey laden with the day's spoils. I regained my cheerfulness, and was much interested by my new companion. Never had I seen any one so kind, and calm, and so truly venerable. We talked a great deal about trees. He appeared to be entirely master of his calling. I began to long to be a woodman, to pass a quiet, and contemplative, and virtuous life, amid the deep silence and beautiful scenery of forests—exercising all the primitive virtues which became so unsophisticated a career.

His dog darted on before us with joyful speed. We had arrived at his cottage, which was ancient, and neat, and well ordered as himself. His wife, attentive to the welcome bark, was already at the gate. She saluted me; and her husband, shortly telling my tale, spoke of me in kind terms. Never had I been treated with greater kindness, never was I more grateful for it. The twilight was dying away, the door was locked, the lamp lighted, a blazing log thrown upon the fire, and the round table covered with a plentiful and pleasant meal. I felt quite happy; and, indeed, to be happy yourself you must live among the happy.

The good woman did not join us in our meal, but sat by the

fireside under the lamp, watching us with a fond smile. Her appearance delighted me, and seemed like a picture.

"Now does not the young gentleman remind you of Peter?" said the dame; "for that is just where he used to sit, God bless him. I wonder when we shall hear of him again?"

"She speaks of our son, young master," said my host, turning to me in explanation.

"A boy such as has been seldom seen among people of our condition, sir, I can well say," continued the old woman, speaking with great animation. "Oh! why should he have ever left home! Young people are ever full of fancies, but will they ever find friends in the world they think so much of, like the father who gives them bread, and the mother who gave them milk?"

"My father brought me up at home, and I have ever lived at home," observed Peter. "I have ever lived in this old forest,—many is the tree that is my foster-brother,—and that is sixty-eight years come Martinmas. I saw my father happy, and wished no more. Nor had I ever a heavy hour till Peter began to take these fancies in his head, and that, indeed, was from a boy this high, for he was ever full of them, and never would do anything with the axe. I am sure I do not know how they got there. The day will come he will wish he had never left home, and perhaps we may yet see him."

"Too late, too late!" said the old woman. "He might have been the prop of our old age. Many is the girl that would have given her eyes for Peter. Our grand-children might have been running this moment about the room. God bless them, whom we shall never bless. And the old man now must work for his old woman as if it were his wedding year."

"Pooh! pooh! as for that, say nothing," rejoined Peter; "for I praise God my arms and legs are hearty yet. And indeed, were they not, we cannot say that our poor boy has ever forgotten us."

"Indeed it is true. He is our own son. But where does the money come from? that is the question. I am sure I often think what I dare not say, and pray God to forgive me. How can a poor woodman's son who never works gain wherewith to support himself, much more to give away? I fear that if all had thier rights, we should have better means to succour Peter than Peter us."

"Nay, nay, say not that, dear Mary," said her husband, reprovingly, "for it is in a manner tempting the devil."

"The devil perhaps sent the thought, but it often comes," answered the old woman, firmly.

"And where is your son, sir?" I asked.

"God, who knows all, can tell, not I," said the old man; "but wherever he be I pray God to bless him."

"Has he left you long, sir?"

"Fifteen years come September; but he ran away once before, when he was barely your height, but that was not for long."

"Indeed," I said, reddening.

"I believe he is a good lad," said the father, "and will never believe harm against him till I hear it. He was a kind boy, though strong-tempered, and even now every year he sends us something, and sometimes writes a line, but never tells us where he is, only that he is very happy, if we are. But for my part I rather think he is in foreign parts."

"That is certain," interrupted Dame Mary. "I dare say he is got among the French."

"He was ever a wrong-headed queer chap," continued the father in an undertone to me; "sometimes he wanted to be a soldier, then a painter, then he was all for travelling about; and I used to say, 'Peter, my boy, do you know what you are?' And when I sent him in the woods to work, when he came home at night, I found that he had been a-painting the trees!"

The conversation had taken a turn, which induced meditation. I was silent and thoughtful; the dame busied herself with work, the old man resumed his unfinished meal. Suddenly there was a loud shouting at the garden gate. All stared and started. The dog jumped up and barked. The shouting was repeated, and was evidently addressed to the inmates of the cottage. The old woodman seized his rifle, and opened the casement.

"Who calls?" he demanded, "and what want you?"

"Dwelleth Peter Winter here?" was inquired.

"He speaks to you," was the reply.

"Open the door, then," said the shouter.

"Tell me first who you are."

"My name has been already mentioned," answered the shouter with a laugh.

"What mean you?"

"Why, that my name is Peter Winter."

The old woman screamed; a strange feeling also was my lot; the woodman dropped the loaded rifle. I prevented it from going off; neither of them could move. At last I opened the door, and the stranger of the Abbey entered.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE was some embracing, much blessing, the old woman never ceased crying, and the eyes of the father were full of tears. The son alone was calm, and imperturbable, and smiling.

"Are you indeed Peter?" exclaimed the old woman, sobbing with joy.

"I never heard so from any one but you," answered the son.

"And am I blessed with the sight of you before my death?" continued the mother.

"Death! why you look ten years younger than when I last saw you?"

"Oh! dear no, Peter. And why did not you tell us where you were?" she continued.

"Because I never knew."

"Oh! my dear, dear son, how tall you have grown! and pray how have you managed to live? honestly I am sure; your face says so."

"As for that, it does not become me to praise myself; but you see I have saved my neck."

"And what would you like to eat?"

"Anything."

The father could not speak for silent joy. I had retired to the remotest corner of the room.

"The old cottage pretty as ever. I have got a drawing of it in my portfolio—always kept it, and your portrait too, mother, and my father cutting down Schinkel's oak; do you remember?"

"Do I remember! Why, what a memory the child has got, and only think of its keeping its poor old mother's head in its pocket-book, and the picture of the cottage, and father cutting down Schinkel's oak. Do I remember!—Why I remember——"

"Come, my dear old lady, give me something to eat, and father your hand again. You flourish like one of your foster brothers. A shower of blessings on you both."

"Ah! what do we want more than to see our dear Peter?" said the old woman bustling about the supper. "And as for working, I warrant you, you shall be plagued no more about working; shall be as idle as it pleases, that's for it. For old Peter was only saying this evening, that he could do more work now, and more easily than when he first married; ay! he will make old bones I warrant him."

"I said, Mary ——"

"Pooh! pooh! never mind what you said, but get the brandy bottle, and give our dear Peter a sup. He shall be plagued no more about working, and that's for it. But, Lord bless us, where is the young master all the time, for I want him to help me get the things."

I stepped forward and caught the eye of the son. "What," he exclaimed, "my little embryo poet, and how came you here, in the name of the holy Magdalen?"

"It is a long story," I said.

"Oh! then pray do not tell it," he replied.

Supper soon appeared. He ate heartily, talking between each mouthful, and full of jests. The father could not speak, but the mother was never silent. He asked many questions about old acquaintances, and I fancied he asked them with little real interest, and only to gratify his mother, who, at each query, burst into fresh admiration of his memory and his kind-heartedness. At length, after much talk, he said, "Come, old people, to bed—to bed; these hours are not for grey hairs. We shall have you all knocked up to-morrow, instead of fresh and joyful."

"I am sure I cannot sleep," said the dame, "I am in such a taking."

"Pooh! you must sleep, mother—good night to you, good night," and embracing her he pushed her into the next room; "good night, dear father," he added in a soft and serious tone, as he pressed the honest woodman's hand.

"And now, little man, you may tell me your story, and we will try to talk each other to sleep." So saying, he flung a fresh log on the fire, and stretched his legs in his father's ancient seat.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was settled that I should remain at the cottage for a few days, and then that, accompanying Winter, I should repair to the capital. Thither he was bound; and for myself, both from his advice and my own impulse, I had resolved to return home.

On the next morning the woodman went not to his usual labour, but remained with his son. They strolled out together, but in a short time returned. The mother bustled about preparing a good dinner. For her this was full employment, but time hung heavy on the old man. At last he took his axe and fairly set to work at an old tree near his dwelling, which he had long condemned, and

never found time to execute. His son and he had few ideas to exchange, and he enjoyed his happiness more while he was employed. Winter proposed a ramble to me, and I joined him.

He was very gay, but would not talk about himself, which I wished. I longed to know what he exactly was, but deemed a direct inquiry indelicate. He delighted to find out places he had known when young, and laughed at me very much about my adventures.

"You see what it is to impart knowledge to youth like you. In eight and forty hours all these valuable secrets are given to Master Frederick, who will perhaps now turn out a great poet."

I bore his rallying as good-humouredly as he could wish, and tried to lead our conversation to subjects which interested me. "Ask me no more questions," he said, "about yourself, I have told you everything. All that I can recommend you now is to practise self-forgetfulness."

We rested ourselves on a bank and talked about foreign countries, of which, though he himself never figured in his tales, he spoke without reserve. My keen attention proved with what curiosity and delight I caught each word. Whenever he paused, I led him by a question to a fresh narrative. I could not withstand expressing how I was charmed by such conversation. "All that I tell you," he said, "and much more, may be found in books. Those that cannot themselves observe, can at least acquire the observation of others. These are indeed shadows, but by watching these shadows we learn that there are substances. Little man, you should read more. At your time of life you can do nothing better than read good books of travels."

"But is it not better myself to travel?"

"Have I not told you that your wandering days have not yet come? Do you wish to meet another Mr. Frederick? You are much too young. Travel is the great source of true wisdom, but to travel with profit you must have such a thing as previous knowledge. Do you comprehend?"

"Ah! sir, I fear me much that I am doomed to be unhappy."

"Poh! poh! Clear your head of all such nonsense. There is no such thing as unhappiness."

"No such thing as unhappiness, sir? How may this be, for all men believe——"

"All men believe many things which are not true; but remember what I say, and when you have lived as long as I have, you will perhaps discover that it is not a paradox. In the meantime it is nonsense talking about it, and I have got an enormous appetite. A fine dinner to-day for us, I warrant you."

So we returned home at a brisk pace. The old woman looked

out at the door when she heard our steps, and, nodding to her son with a smile of fondness, "You must walk in the garden awhile, Peter," she said, "for I am busy getting the room ready. Now, I dare say you are thinking of the dinner, but you cannot tell me what there is for Peter, that you cannot. But I'll tell you, for if you fret yourself with guessing, mayhap it will hurt your relish. Do you remember crying once for a pig, Peter, and father saying a woodman's boy must not expect to live like the forest farmer's son? Well, he may say what he likes; Peter, there *is* a pig."

The father joined us, cleanly shaved, and in his Sunday raiment. I never saw any one look so truly respectable as did this worthy old peasant in his long blue coat with large silver buttons, deep waistcoat covered with huge pink flowers and small green leaves, blue stockings, and massy buckles.

The three days at the woodman's cottage flew away most pleasantly. I was grieved when they were gone, and in spite of my natural courage, which was confirmed by meditation and strengthened by my constantly trying it in ideal conjunctures, I thought of my appearance at home with a little anxiety.

We were to perform our journey on foot. The morning of the third day was to light us into the city. All was prepared. I parted from my kind friends with many good wishes, hearty shakes of the hand, and frequent promises of another visit. Peter was coming to them again very shortly. They hoped I might again be his companion. The father walked on with us some little way. The mother stood at the cottage door until we were out of sight, smiling through her tears, and waving her hand with many blessings.

"I must take care of my knapsack," said the younger Winter; "evil habits are catching."

"Nevertheless, I hope you will sometimes let me carry it. At any rate give me your portfolio."

"No, no; you are not to be trusted, and so come on."

CHAPTER XX.

BUT, my dear friend, you have lodged, you have fed, you have befriended, you have supported me. If my father were to know that we parted thus he would never forgive me. Pray, pray, tell me."

"Prithee, no more. You have told me your name, which is

against my rules; you know mine, no one of my fellow-travellers ever did before; and yet you are not contented. You grow unreasonable. Did I not say that, if our acquaintance were worth maintaining, we should meet again? Well! I say the same thing now—and so good bye.”

“Dear sir, pray, pray ——”

“This is my direction—your course lies over that bridge—look sharp about you, and do not enter into your private world, for the odds are you may find your friend Count Frederick picking a pocket. Good morning, little man.”

We parted, and I crossed the ridge. The stir of man seemed strange after the silence of the woods. I did not feel quite at my ease; my heart a little misgave me. I soon reached the street in which my father resided. I thought of the woodman’s cottage, and the careless days I had spent under that simple roof. I wished myself once more by Schinkel’s oak, talking of Araby the Blest with that strange man, with whom my acquaintance, although so recent, seemed now only a dream. Did he really exist? were they all real beings with whom I seemed lately to have consorted? Or had I indeed been all this time plunged in one of my incurable reveries? I thought of the laughing girl, and her dark sentimental friend. I felt for the chain which I always wore round my neck. It was gone. No doubt, then, it must all be true.

I had reached the gate. I uttered an involuntary sigh and took up the knocker. It was for a moment suspended. I thought of the Contarinis, and my feeble knock hurried into a sharp rap. “’Tis a nervous business,” thought I, “there is no concealing it. ’Tis flat rebellion—’tis desertion—’tis an outrage of all parental orders—’tis a violation of the law of nature and nations.” I sighed again. “Yet these are all bugbears; for what can they do to me? Is there any punishment that they can inflict that I care for? Certainly not, and ’tis likely it will all blow over. Yet the explanations, and the vile excuses, and the petty examinations, there is something pitiful, and contemptible, and undignified, in the whole process. What is it that so annoys me? ’Tis not fear. I think it is the disgust of being accountable to any human being?”

I went up stairs. My father, I felt sure, was away. I found the Baroness alone. She started when I entered, and looked sullen. Her countenance, she flattered herself, was a happy mixture of the anxiety which became both a spouse and a mother, pity for my father, pity for me, and decided indignation at my very improper conduct.

“How do you do, Madam?” I inquired in as quiet a tone as I could command. “My father is, I suppose, at his office.”

“I am sure I cannot tell,” she replied, speaking in a very sub-

dued serious tone, as if there were death in the house. "I believe he *has* gone out to-day. He has been very agitated indeed, and I think is extremely unwell. We have all been extremely agitated and alarmed. I have kept myself as quiet as I could, but can bear no noise whatever. The Baron has received a fine letter from your tutor," she continued in a brisker, and rather malignant tone, "but your father will speak to you. I know nothing about these things. I wished to have said something to soothe him, but I know I never interfere for any good."

"Well," I observed, with a dogged, desperate tone, speaking through my teeth, "well! all I can say is, that if my father has been prejudiced against me by a parcel of infamous falsehoods, as it appears by your account, I know how to protect myself. I see how the ground lies; I see that I have already been judged, and am now to be punished, without a trial. But I will not submit any longer to such persecution. Kindness in this house I never expect, but justice is a right enjoyed by a common woodman and denied only to me."

"Dear me, Contarini, how violent you are! I never said your father was even angry. I only said I thought he was a little unwell—a little bilious, I think. My dear Contarini, you are always so very violent. I am sure I said I was confident you would never have left college without a very good cause indeed. I have no doubt you will explain everything in the most satisfactory manner possible. I do not know what you mean always by talking of not expecting kindness in this house. I am sure I never interfere with you. I make it a rule always, when your interest is in the least concerned, never to give an opinion. I am sure I wish you were more happy and less violent. As for judging and punishing without a trial, you know your father never punishes any one, nor has he decided anything, for all he knows is from the letter of your tutor, and that is but a line, merely saying you had quitted the college without leave, and, as they supposed, had gone home. They said, too, that they were the more surprised, as your general behaviour was quite unexceptionable. Not at all against you the letter was, not at all, I assure you. I pointed out to your father more than once that the letter was, if anything, rather in your favour, because I had no doubt that you would explain the step in the most satisfactory manner; and they said, you see, that your conduct, otherwise, was perfectly unexceptionable."

"Well, my dear Madam, I am very sorry if I have offended you. How are my brothers?"

"I am very willing to forget it. You may say and think what you please, Contarini, as long as you are not violent. The children are pretty well. Ernest is quite ready to go to college, and now

there is no one to take care of him. I always thought of your being there with quite a feeling of satisfaction, for I was sure that you would not refuse to do what you could for him among the boys. As it is, I have no doubt he will be killed the first half-year, or, at least, have a limb broken, for, poor dear boy, he is so delicate, he cannot fight."

"Well, my dear Madam, if I be not there, I can recommend him to some one who will take care of him. Make yourself quite easy. A little rough life will do him no harm, and I will answer he is not killed, and even have not a limb broken. Now, what do you recommend me to do about my father? Shall I walk down to him?"

"I certainly think not. You know that he will certainly be at home this afternoon, though, to be sure, he will be engaged; but o-morrow, or the day after, I have no doubt he will find half an hour to speak to you. You know he is so very busy."

I immediately resolved to walk down to him. I had no idea of having a scene impending over me in this manner for days. My father at this time filled the office of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He had been appointed to this post recently, and I had never yet visited him at his new office. I repaired to it immediately. It was at some distance from his house. His horses were waiting at the door; therefore I was sure that he was to be found. When I entered I found myself in a hall where a porter was loitering in a large chair. I asked him for Baron Fleming. He did not deign to answer me, but pointed to a mahogany door. I entered, and found myself in a large well-furnished room, fitted up with desks. At the end two young men were fencing. Another, seated at a round table, covered with papers, was copying music, and occasionally trying a note on his guitar. A fourth was throwing himself into attitudes before a pier-glass; and the fifth, who was the only one whose employment was in any degree of a political nature, was seated at his desk, reading the newspaper.

No one noticed my entrance. I looked in vain for my father, and with some astonishment at those I found in his place. Then I inquired for Baron Fleming, and, for the second time in one day, I did not receive any answer. I repeated my query in a more audible tone, and the young gentleman who was reading the newspaper, without taking his eyes off the columns, demanded in a curt voice what I wanted with him.

"What is that to you?" I ingenuously asked.

This unusual reply excited attention. They all looked at me; and when they had looked at me, they looked at each other and smiled. My appearance, indeed, of which till I had seen myself in the pier-glass I was not sensible, was well calculated to excite a smile and to attract a stare. My clothes were not untattered, and

were very much soiled, being covered with shreds of moss and blades of grass, and stuck over with thistle-tops; my boots had not been cleaned for a week; my shirt-frill, which fell over my shoulders, was torn and dirtied; my dishevelled and unbrushed locks reached my neck, and could scarcely be said to be covered by the small forester's cap which I always wore at school, and in which I had decamped. Animate the countenance of this strange figure with that glow of health which can only be obtained by the pedestrian, and which seemed to shock the nerves of this company of dapper youths.

"If you want Baron Fleming, then, you must go up-stairs," said the student of the newspaper in a peevish voice.

As I shut the door I heard the burst of laughter. I mounted up the great staircase and came into an antechamber.

"What do you want, sir? what do you want, sir? You must not come here," said a couple of pompous messengers, nearly pushing me out.

"I shall not go away," I replied "I want Baron Fleming."

"Engaged, young gentleman, engaged—can't see any one—impossible."

"I shall wait, then."

"No use waiting, young gentleman—better go."

"It is not such an easy matter, I perceive, to see one's father," I thought to myself.

I did not know which was his room, otherwise I would have gone in; but turning round, I detected written on a door, "Under Secretary's Office," and I ran to it.

"Stop, sir, stop," said the messengers.

But I had hold of the lock. They pulled me, I kicked the door, and out came the private secretary of the under secretary.

"What is all this?" asked the private secretary. He was a fit companion for the young gentlemen I had left down stairs.

"I want Baron Fleming," I replied, "and these men will not tell me where he is, and therefore I come to the under secretary to ask." So saying, I most indignantly freed my arm from the capture of one of the messengers, and kicked the shin of the other.

"May I ask who you are?" demanded the private secretary.

"I am Baron Contarini Fleming," I replied.

"Pray sit down," said the private secretary, "I will be with you in a moment."

The two messengers darted back and continued bowing without turning their backs until they unexpectedly reached the end of the room.

The private secretary returned with the under secretary. The under secretary told me that my father was engaged with the chancellor, and that his door was locked, but that the moment the

door was unlocked, and the chancellor departed, he would take care that he was informed of my arrival. In the meantime, as he himself had a deputation to receive in his room, who were to come to-day to complain in form of what they had for months been complaining informally, he begged that I would have the kindness to accompany his private secretary to the room down stairs.

The room down stairs I again entered. The private secretary introduced me. All looked very confused, and the young gentleman who was still reading the newspaper immediately handed it to me. I had never read a newspaper in my life, but I accepted his offer to show my importance. As I did not understand politics I turned to the back of the sheet, where there is generally an article on the fine arts, or a review of a new book. My wandering eye fixed upon a memoir of the Chevalier de Winter. I was equally agitated and astonished. My eye quivered over the page. I saw in an instant enough to convince me it was my friend, and that my friend was styled "a great ornament to the country," and the Northmen were congratulated on at length producing an artist whom the Italians themselves acknowledged unrivalled among the living. I learnt that he was the son of a peasant; how his genius for painting early developed itself; how he had led for years an eccentric and wandering life; how he had returned to Rome, and at once produced a master-piece; how he had gained prizes in academies; how he was esteemed and honoured by foreign princes; how his own illustrious monarch, ever alive to the patronage of the fine arts, had honoured him with two commissions; how he had returned to his native country with these magnificent pictures, which were daily exhibiting in the Royal Academy of Arts; how the king had conferred on him the collar of a high order, and offered him a great pension; how he had refused the pension, and requested only that a competence might be settled on his parents.

I was bewildered; I fell into a deep reverie, the paper dropped from my hand, the door opened, and the private secretary summoned me to the presence of my father.

CHAPTER XXI.

It is time that you should know something of my father. You must remember that he was little more than a score of years my senior. Imagine, then, a man of about four and thirty years of age, tall and thin, handsome and elegant, pensive and pale. His clear

broad brow; his aquiline, but delicately-chiselled nose; his grey, deep-set, and penetrating eye; and his compressed lips, altogether formed a countenance which enchanted women and awed men.

His character is more difficult to delineate. It was perhaps inscrutable. I will attempt to sketch it, as it might then have appeared to those who considered themselves qualified to speculate upon human nature.

His talents were of a high order, and their exercise alone had occasioned his rise in a country in which he had no interest and no connexions. He had succeeded in everything he had undertaken. As an orator, as a negotiator, and in all the details of domestic administration, he was alike eminent; and his luminous interpretation of national law had elevated the character of his monarch in the opinion of Europe, and had converted a second-rate power into the mediator between the highest.

The minister of a free people, he was the personal as well as the political pupil of Metternich. Yet he respected the institutions of his country, because they existed, and because experience proved that under their influence the natives had become more powerful machines.

His practice of politics was compressed in two words—subtlety and force. The minister of an emperor, he would have maintained his system by armies; in the cabinet of a small kingdom, he compensated for his deficiency by intrigue.

His perfection of human nature was a practical man. He looked upon a theorist either with alarm or with contempt. Proud in his own energies, and conscious that he owed everything to his own dexterity, he believed all to depend upon the influence of individual character. He required men not to think but to act, not to examine but to obey; and animating their brute force with his own intelligence, he found the success which he believed could never be attained by the rational conduct of an enlightened people.

Out of the cabinet the change of his manner might perplex the superficial. The moment that he entered society his thoughtful face would break into a fascinating smile, and he listened with interest to the tales of levity, and joined with readiness in each frivolous pursuit. He was sumptuous in his habits, and was said to be even voluptuous. Perhaps he affected gallantry, because he was deeply impressed with the influence of women both upon public and upon private opinion. With them he was a universal favourite; and as you beheld him assenting with conviction to their gay or serious nonsense, and waving with studied grace his perfumed handkerchief in his delicately-white and jewelled hand, you might have supposed him for a moment a consummate lord chamberlain—but only for a moment—for had you caught his eye,

you had withdrawn your gaze with precipitation, and perhaps with awe. For the rest, he spoke all languages, never lost his self-possession, and never, in my recollection, had displayed a spark of strong feeling.

I loved my father deeply, but my love was mixed with more than reverence; it was blended with fear. He was the only person before whom I ever quailed. To me he had been universally kind. I could not recal, in the whole period of my existence, a single harsh word directed to myself that had ever escaped him. Whenever he saw me he smiled and nodded; and sometimes, in early days, when I requested an embrace, he had pressed my lips. As I grew in years everything was arranged that could conduce to my happiness. Whatever I desired was granted; whatever wish I expressed was gratified. Yet with all this, by some means or other which I could not comprehend, the intercourse between my father and myself seemed never to advance. I was still to him as much an infant as if I were yet a subject of the nursery; and the impending and important interview might be considered the first time that it was ever my fortune to engage with him in serious converse.

The door was opened; my heart palpitated; the private secretary withdrew; I entered the lofty room. My father was writing. He did not look up as I came in. I stood at his table a second; he raised his eyes, stared at my odd appearance, and then, pointing to a chair, he said, "How do you do, Contarini? I have been expecting you some days." Then he resumed his writing.

I was rather surprised, but my entrance had so agitated me that I was not sorry to gain time. A clock was opposite to me, and I employed myself in watching the hands. They advanced over one, two, three minutes very slowly and solemnly; still my father wrote; even five minutes disappeared, and my father continued writing. I thought five minutes had never gone so slowly; I began to think of what I should say, and to warm up my courage by an imaginary conversation. Suddenly I observed that ten minutes had flown, and these last five had scudded in a most surprising manner. Still my father was employed. At length he rang his bell; one of my friends, the messengers, entered. My father sent for Mr. Strelamb; and before Mr. Strelamb, who was his private secretary, appeared, he had finished his letter, and given it to the other messenger. Then Mr. Strelamb came in, and seated himself opposite to my father, and took many notes with an attention and quickness which appeared to me quite marvellous; and then my father, looking at the clock, said he had an appointment with the Prussian ambassador, at his palace: but, while Mr. Strelamb was getting some papers in order for him, he sent for the under secretary, and gave

him so many directions that I thought the under secretary must have the most wonderful memory in the world. At length my father left the room, saying as he quitted it, "Rest you here, Contarini."

I was consoled for this neglect by the consciousness that my father was a very great man indeed. I had no idea of such a great man. I was filled with awe. I looked out of window to see him mount his horse; but, just as he had got one foot in the stirrup, a carriage dashed up to the door; my father withdrew his foot, and, saluting the person in the carriage, entered it. It was the Austrian ambassador. In ten minutes he came out; but just as the steps were rattled up, and the chasseur had closed the door with his best air, my father returned to the carriage; but he remained only a minute, and then, mounting his horse, galloped off.

"This is, indeed, a great man," I thought, "and I am his son." I began to muse upon this idea of political greatness. The simple woodman, and his decorous cottage, and his free forest life recurred to my mind, unaccompanied by that feeling of satisfaction which I had hitherto associated with them, and were pictured in faded and rather insipid colours. Poetry, and philosophy, and the delights of solitude, and the beauty of truth, and the rapture of creation—know not how it was—they certainly did not figure in such paramount beauty and colossal importance as I had previously viewed them. I thought of my harassing hours of doubt and diffidence with disgust; I sickened at the time wasted over imperfect efforts at what, when perfect, seemed somehow of questionable importance. I was dissatisfied with my past life. Ambassadors and chancellors, under secretaries and private secretaries, and public messengers flitted across my vision. I was sensibly struck at the contrast between all this greatness achieved, and moving before me in its quick and proud reality, and my weak meditations of unexecuted purposes, and dreamy visions of imaginary grandeur. I threw myself in my father's chair, took up a pen, and insensibly to myself while I indulged in these reflections, scribbled Contarini Fleming over every paper that offered itself for my signature.

My father was a long while away. I fell into a profound reverie; he entered the room; I did not observe him; I was entirely lost. I was engaged in a conversation with both the Prussian and Austrian ambassadors together. My father called me; I did not hear him. My eyes were fixed on vacancy, but I was listening with the greatest attention to their excellencies. My father approached, lifted me gently from his seat, and placed me in my original chair. I stared, looked up, and shook myself like a man awakened. He slightly smiled, and then seating himself, shrugging up his shoulders at my labours, and arranging his papers, he said at the same time—

"Now, Contarini, I wish you to tell me why you have left your college?"

This was a home query, and entirely brought me to myself. With the greatest astonishment I found that I had no answer. I did not speak, and my father commenced writing. In two or three instants he said, "Well, can you answer my question?"

"Yes, sir," I replied, to gain time.

"Well! tell me."

"Because, sir—because it was no use staying there."

"Why?"

"Because I learned nothing!"

"Were you the first boy in the school, or the last? Had you learnt everything that they could teach you, or nothing?"

"I was neither first nor last; not that I should be ashamed of being last where I consider it no honour to be first."

"Why not?"

"Because I do not think it is an enviable situation to be the first among the learners of words."

My father gave me a sharp glance, and then said, "Did you leave college because you considered that they taught you only words?"

"Yes, sir; and because I wish to learn ideas."

"Some silly book has filled your head, Contarini, with these ridiculous notions about the respective importance of words and ideas. Few ideas are correct ones, and what are correct no one can ascertain; but with words we govern men."

This observation completely knocked up all my philosophy, and I was without an answer.

"I tell you what, Contarini: I suspect that there must be some other reason for this step of yours. I wish you to tell it to me. If you were not making there that progress which every intelligent youth desires, such a circumstance might be a very good reason for your representing your state to your parent, and submitting it to his consideration; but you—you have never complained to me upon the subject. You said nothing of the kind when you were last with me; you never communicated it by letter. I never heard of a boy running away from school because they did not teach him sufficient, or sufficiently well. Your instructors do not complain of your conduct, except with regard to this step. There must be some other reason which induced you to adopt a measure which, I flatter myself, you have already learnt to consider as both extremely unauthorised and very injudicious."

I had a good mind to pour it all out. I had a good mind to dash Venice in his teeth, and let him chew it as he could. I was on the point of asking a thousand questions, for a solution of which I had been burning all my life, but the force of early impressions

was too strong. I shunned the fatal word, and remained silent, with a clouded brow, and my eyes fixed upon the ground.

"Answer me, Contarini," he continued; "you know that all I ask is only for your good. Answer me, Contarini; I request that you answer me. Were you uncomfortable? Were you unhappy?"

"I am always unhappy," I replied, in a gloomy tone.

My father moved round his chair. "You astonish me, Contarini! Unhappy!—always unhappy! Why are you unhappy? I should have thought you the happiest boy of my acquaintance. I am sure I cannot conceive what makes you unhappy. Pray tell me. Is there anything you want? Have I done—has anybody done anything to annoy you? Have you anything upon your mind?"

I did not answer: my eyes were still fixed upon the ground, the tears stealing down my cheek—tears not of tenderness but rage.

"My dear Contarini," continued my father, "I must indeed earnestly request you to answer me. Throughout life you have never disobeyed me. Do not let to-day be an epoch of rebellion. Speak to me frankly; tell me why you are unhappy."

"Because I have no one I love—because there is no one who loves me—because I hate this country—because I hate everything and everybody—because I hate myself." I rose from my seat and stamped about the room.

My father was perfectly astounded. He had thought that I might possibly have got into debt, or had a silly quarrel; but he did not lose his self-command.

"Sit down, Contarini," he said, very calmly. "Never give way to your feelings. Explain to me quietly what all this means. What book have you been reading to fill your head with all this nonsense? What could have so suddenly altered your character?"

"I have read no book; my character is what it always was, and I have only expressed to-day, for the first time, what I have ever felt. Life is intolerable to me, and I wish to die."

"What can you mean by persons not loving you?" resumed my father; "I am sure the Baroness"—

"The Baroness!" I interrupted him in a sharp tone—"what is the Baroness to me? Always this wretched nursery view of life—always considered an insignificant, unmeaning child! What is the Baroness and her petty persecutions to me? Pah!"

I grew bold. The truth is, my vanity was flattered by finding the man who was insensible to all, and before whom all trembled, yield his sympathy and his time to me. I began to get interested in the interview. I was excited by this first conversation with a parent. My suppressed character began unconsciously to develop itself, and I unintentionally gave way to my mind, as if I were in one of my own scenes.

"I should be sorry if there were even petty persecutions," said my father, "and equally so if you were insensible to them; but I hope that you speak only under excited feelings. For your father, Contarini, I can at least answer that his conscience cannot accuse him of a deficiency in love for one who has such strong claims upon a father's affection. I can indeed say that I have taken no important step in life which had not for its ulterior purpose your benefit; and what, think you, can sweeten this all-engrossing and perhaps fatal labour, to which I am devoted, but the thought that I am toiling for the future happiness of my child? You are young, Contarini. Some day you will become acquainted with the feelings of a father, and you will then blush with shame and remorse that you ever accused me of insensibility."

While he spoke I was greatly softened. The tears stole down my cheek. I leant my arm upon the table, and tried to shade my face with my hand. My father rose from his seat, turned the key of the door, and resumed his place.

"Occupied with affairs," he resumed, "which do not always allow me sleep, I have never found time for those slight parental offices which I do not think less delightful because it has been my misfortune not to fulfil or to enjoy them. But you, Contarini, have never been absent from my thoughts, and I had considered that I had made such arrangements as must secure you the gratification of every innocent desire. But to-day I find, for the first time, that I have been mistaken for years. I regret it; I wish, if possible, to compensate for my unhappy neglect, or rather unfortunate ignorance. Tell me, Contarini, what do you wish me to do?"

"Nothing, nothing," I sobbed and sighed.

"But if necessity have hitherto brought us less together than I could wish, you are now, Contarini, fast advancing to that period of life to which I looked forward as a consolatory recompense for this deplorable estrangement. I hoped to find in you a companion. I hoped that I might have the high gratification of forming you into a great and a good man—that I might find in my son not merely a being to be cherished, but a friend, a counsellor, a colleague—yes! Contarini, perhaps a successor."

I clasped my hands in agony, but restrained a cry."

"And now," he continued, "I am suddenly told, and by himself, that I have never loved him; but still more painful, still more heartrending, is the accompanying declaration, which, indeed, is what I could not be prepared for. Misconception on his part, however improbable, might have accounted for his crediting my coldness; but alas! I have no room for hope or doubt. His plain avowal can never be misconstrued. I must then yield to the

terrible conviction that I am an object of abhorrence to my child."

I flung myself at his feet—I seized his hand, I kissed it, and bathed it with my tears.

"Spare me, oh! spare me!" I faintly muttered. "Henceforth I will be all you wish!" I clung upon his hand, I would not rise till he pardoned me. "Pardon me," I said, "pardon me, I beseech you, father, for I spoke in madness! Pardon me, pardon me, dear father! It was in madness, for indeed there is something which comes over me sometimes like madness, but now it will never come, because you love me. Only tell me that you love me, and I will always do everything. I am most grieved for what I said about the Baroness. She is too good! I will never give you again an uneasy moment, not a single uneasy moment. Now that I know that you love me, you may depend upon me—you may indeed. You may depend upon me for ever!"

He smiled, and raised me from the ground, and kissed my forehead. "Compose yourself, dearest boy. Strelamb must soon come in. Try more to repress your feelings. There, sit down, and calm yourself."

He resumed his writing directly, and I sat sobbing myself into composure. In about a quarter of an hour, he said, "*I must* send for Strelamb now, Contarini. If you go into the next room, you can wash your face."

When I returned, my father said, "Come! come! you look quite blooming. By the bye, you are aware what a very strange figure you are, Contarini? After being closeted all the morning with me, they will think, from your costume, that you are a foreign ambassador. Now go home and dress, for I have a large dinner party to-day, and I wish you to dine with me. There are several persons whom you should know. And, if you like, you may take my horses, for I had rather walk home."

CHAPTER XXII.

I WAS so very happy that, for some time, I did not think of the appalling effort that awaited me. It was not till I had fairly commenced dressing that I remembered that in the course of an hour, for the first time in my life, I was to enter a room full of strangers, conducting themselves with ease, in all that etiquette of society in which I was entirely unpractised. My heart misgave me.

I wished myself again in the forest. I procrastinated my toilet to the last possible moment. Ignorant of the art of dress, I found myself making a thousand experiments, all of which failed. The more I consulted my glass the less favourable was the impression. I brushed my hair out of curl. I confined my neck for the first time in a cravat. Each instant my appearance became more awkward, more formal, and more ineffectual. At last I was obliged to go down; and, less at my ease, and conscious of appearing worse than ever I did in my life, at the only moment of that life in which appearance had been of the slightest consequence, and had ever occupied my thoughts, I entered the room at a side door. It was very full, as I had expected. I stole in without being observed, which a little re-animated my courage. I looked round in vain for a person I knew; I crept to a corner. All seemed at their ease. All were smiling—all exchanging words, if not ideas. The women all appeared beautiful, the men all elegant. I painfully felt my wretched inferiority. I watched the Baroness, magnificently attired and sparkling with diamonds, wreathed with smiles, and scattering without effort phrases which seemed to diffuse universal pleasure. This woman, whom I had presumed to despise and dared to insult, became to me an object of admiration and of envy. She even seemed to me beautiful. I was bewildered.

Suddenly a gentleman approached me. It was the under secretary. I was delighted by his notice. I answered his many uninteresting questions about every school pastime, which I detested, as if I felt the greatest interest in their recollection. All that I desired was that he would not leave me, that I might at least appear to be doing what the others were, and might be supposed to be charmed, although I was in torture. At length he walked off to another group, and I found myself once more alone, apparently without a single chance of keeping up the ball. I felt as if every one were watching with wonder the strange, awkward, ugly, silent boy. I coined my cheek into a base smile, but I found that it would not pass. I caught the eye of the Baroness; she beckoned me to come to her. I joined her without delay. She introduced me to a lady who was sitting at her side. This lady had a son at the college, and asked me many questions. I answered in the most nervous, rapid manner, as if her son were my most intimate friend, gave the anxious mother a complete detail of all his occupations, and praised the institution up to the seventh heaven. I was astonished at the tone of affection with which the Baroness addressed me, at the interest which she took in everything which concerned me. It was ever "Contarini, dear,"—"Contarini, my love,"—"You have been riding to-day. Where have you been? I have hardly had time to speak to you. He only came home

to-day. He is looking vastly well—Very well, indeed. Very much grown—Oh! amazingly—Quite a beau for you, Baroness—Oh! yes, quite delightful.”

What amiable people! I thought, and what would I give to be once more in old Winter's cottage!

The door opened, the Chevalier de Winter was announced. My fellow-traveller entered the room, though I could scarcely recognise him in his rich and even fanciful dress, and adorned with his brilliant order. I was struck with his fine person, his noble carriage, and his highly-polished manner. Except my father, I had never seen so true a nobleman. The Baron went forward to receive him with his most courteous air, and most fascinating smile. I withdrew as he led him to my mother. I watched the Baroness as she rose to greet him. I was surprised at the warmth of her welcome, and the tone of consideration with which she received him. Some of the guests, who were the highest nobles in the country, requested my father to present them to him: with others Winter was already acquainted, and they seemed honoured by his recognition.

“This also is a great man,” I exclaimed, “but of a different order.” Old feelings began to boil up from the abyss in which I had plunged them. I sympathised with this great and triumphant artist. In a few days it seemed that the history of genius had been acted before me for my instruction, and for my encouragement. A combination of circumstances had allowed me to trace this man from his first hopeless obscurity. I had seen all—the strong predisposition, the stubborn opposition of fortune, the first efforts, the first doubts, the paramount conviction, the long struggle, the violated ties, the repeated flights, the deep studies, the sharp discipline, the great creation, and the glorious triumph.

My father, crossing the room, saw me. “Contarini,” he said, “where have you been all this time? I have been often looking for you. Come with me, and I will introduce you to the Chevalier de Winter, one of the first painters in the world, and who has just come from Rome. You must go and see his pictures; every one is talking of them. Always know eminent men, and always be master of the subject of the day. Chevalier,” for we had now come up to him, “my son desires your acquaintance.”

“Ah! fellow-traveller, welcome, welcome—I told you we should soon meet again,” and he pressed my hand with warmth.

“Sir, I had a prescience that I had been the companion of a great man.”

This was pretty well said for a bashful youth, but it was really not a compliment. The moment I addressed Winter, I resumed unconsciously my natural tone, and reminded by his presence that higher accomplishments and qualities existed than a mere acquaint-

ance with etiquette, and the vivacity which could enliven the passages of ordinary conversation, I began to feel a little more at my ease.

Dinner was announced. The table was round. I sat between the under secretary and the lady to whom I had been introduced. The scene was a very novel one, and I was astonished at observing a magnificent repast, which all seemed to pique themselves upon tasting as little as possible. They evidently assembled here, then, I thought, for the sake of conversation, yet how many are silent, and what is said might be omitted. But I was then ignorant of the purposes for which human beings are brought together. My female companion, who was a little wearied by a great general, who, although a hero and a strategist, was soon beaten and bewildered in a campaign of repartee, turned round to amuse herself with her other supporter. Her terrific child was again introduced. I had drunk a glass or two of wine, and altogether had, in a great degree recovered my self-possession. I could support her tattle no longer. I assured the astonished mother that I had never even heard of her son, that, if really at college, he must be in a different part of the establishment, and that I had never met him, that I did not even know the name, that the college was a very bad college indeed, that nobody learnt anything there, that I abhorred it, and hoped that I should never return; and then I asked her to do me the honour of taking wine.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE day after the party, I went with the Baroness to see the great pictures of Winter in the Royal Academy of Arts. Both of them seemed to be magnificent; but one, which was a national subject, and depicted the emancipating exploits of one of the heroic monarchs, was the most popular. I did not feel so much interested with this. I did not sympathise with the gloomy savage scene—the black pine forests, the rough mountains, the feudal forms and dresses; but the other, which was of a very different character, afforded me exquisite delight. It represented a procession going up to sacrifice at a temple in a Grecian isle. The brilliant colouring, the beautiful and beautifully-clad forms, the delicate Ionian fane, seated on a soft acclivity covered with sunny trees, the classical and lovely background, the deep-blue sea, broken by a tall white scudding sail, and backed by undulating and azure mountains—I stood before it in a trance, a crowd of ideas swiftly gathered in my mind. It was a poem.

After this I called upon Winter and found him in his studio. Many persons were there, and of high degree. It was the first time I had ever been in the studio of an artist. I was charmed with all I saw; the infinite sketches, the rough studies, the unfinished pictures, the lay figure, the beautiful cast, and here and there some choice relic of antiquity, a torso, a bust, or a gem. I remained here the whole morning examining his Venetian sketches; and a day seldom passed over that I did not drop in to pay my devotions at this delightful temple.

I was indeed so much at home, that if he were engaged, I resumed my portfolio without notice, so that in time I knew perhaps more about Venice than many persons who had passed their whole lives there.

When I had been at home a fortnight, my father one day invited me to take a ride with him, and began conversing with me on my plans. He said that he did not wish me to return to college, but that he thought me at least a year too young to repair to the university, whither on every account he desired me to go. "We should consider then," he continued, "how this interval can be turned to the greatest advantage. I wish you to mix as much as is convenient with society. I apprehend that you have, perhaps, hitherto indulged a little too much in lonely habits. Young men are apt to get a little abstracted, and occasionally to think that there is something singular in their nature, when the fact is, if they were better acquainted with their fellow creatures, they would find they were mistaken. This is a common error, indeed the commonest. I am not at all surprised that you have fallen into it. All have. The most practical, business-like men that exist have, many of them, when children, conceived themselves totally disqualified to struggle in the world. You may rest assured of this. I could mention many remarkable instances. All persons, when young, are fond of solitude, and when they are beginning to think, are sometimes surprised at their own thoughts. There is nothing to be deplored, scarcely to be feared in this. It almost always wears off; but sometimes it happens that they have not judicious friends by them to explain, that the habits which they think peculiar are universal, and if unreasonably indulged, can ultimately only turn them into indolent, insignificant members of society, and occasion them lasting unhappiness."

I made no reply, but gave up all idea of writing a tale, which was to embrace both Venice and Greece, and which I had been for some days meditating.

"But to enter society with pleasure, Contarini, you must be qualified for it. I think it quite time for you to make yourself master of some accomplishments. Decidedly you should make yourself a

good dancer. Without dancing you can never attain a perfectly graceful carriage, which is of the highest importance in life, and should be every man's ambition. You are yet too young fully to comprehend how much in life depends upon manner. Whenever you see a man who is successful in society, try to discover what makes him pleasing, and if possible adopt his system. You should learn to fence. For languages, at present, French will be sufficient. You speak it fairly: try to speak it elegantly. Read French authors. Read Rochefoucault. The French writers are the finest in the world, for they clear our heads of all ridiculous ideas. Study precision.

"Do not talk too much at present, do not *try* to talk. But whenever you speak, speak with self-possession. Speak in a subdued tone, and always look at the person whom you are addressing. Before one can engage in general conversation with any effect, there is a certain acquaintance with trifling but amusing subjects which must be first attained. You will soon pick up sufficient by listening and observing. Never argue. In society nothing must be discussed: give only results. If any person differ from you, bow and turn the conversation. In society never think, always be on the watch, or you will miss many opportunities and say many disagreeable things.

"Talk to women—talk to women as much as you can. This is the best school. This is the way to gain fluency, because you need not care what you say, and had better not be sensible. They, too, will rally you on many points, and as they are women you will not be offended. Nothing is of so much importance and of so much use to a young man entering life as to be well criticised by women. It is impossible to get rid of those thousand bad habits which we pick up in boyhood, without this supervision. Unfortunately you have no sisters. But never be offended if a woman rally you; encourage her, otherwise you will never be free from your awkwardness or any little oddities, and certainly never learn to dress.

"You ride pretty well, but you had better go through the manège. Every gentleman should be a perfect cavalier. You shall have your own groom and horses, and I wish you to ride regularly every day.

"As you are to be at home for so short a time, and for other reasons, I think it better that you should not have a tutor in the house. Parcel out your morning then for your separate masters. Rise early and regularly and read for three hours. Read the *Memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz—the Life of Richelieu—everything about Napoleon*: read works of that kind. Strelamb shall prepare you a list. Read no history, nothing but biography, for that is life without theory. Then fence. Talk an hour with your French master, but do not throw the burden of the conversation upon him.

Give him an account of something. Describe to him the events of yesterday, or give him a detailed account of the constitution. You will have then sufficiently rested yourself for your dancing. And after that ride and amuse yourself as much as you can. Amusement to an observing mind is study."

I pursued the system which my father had pointed out with exactness, and soon with pleasure. I sacredly observed my hours of reading, and devoted myself to the study of the lives of what my father considered really great men—that is to say, men of great energies and violent volition, who look upon their fellow-creatures as mere tools, with which they can build up a pedestal for their solitary statue, and who sacrifice every feeling which should sway humanity, and every high work which genius should really achieve, to the short-sighted gratification of an irrational and outrageous selfishness. As for my manners, I flattered myself that they advanced in measure with my mind, although I already emulated Napoleon. I soon overcame the fear which attended my first experiments in society, and by scrupulously observing the paternal maxims, I soon became very self-satisfied. I listened to men with a delightful mixture of deference and self-confidence: were they old, and did I differ from them, I contented myself by positively stating my opinion in a subdued voice, and then either turning the subject or turning upon my heel. But as for women, it is astonishing how well I got on. The nervous rapidity of my first rattle soon subsided into a continuous flow of easy nonsense. Impertinent and flippant, I was universally hailed an original and a wit. But the most remarkable incident was, that the Baroness and myself became the greatest friends. I was her constant attendant, and rehearsed to her flattered ear all my evening performance. She was the person with whom I practised, and as she had a taste in dress I encouraged her opinions. Unconscious that she was at once my lay figure and my mirror, she loaded me with presents, and announced to all her coterie that I was the most delightful young man of her acquaintance.

From all this it may easily be suspected that at the age of fifteen I had unexpectedly become one of the most affected, conceited, and intolerable atoms that ever peopled the sunbeam of society.

A few days before I quitted home for the university, I paid a farewell visit to Winter, who was himself on the point of returning to Rome.

"Well, my dear Chevalier," I said, seizing his hand, and speaking in a voice of affected interest, "I could not think of leaving town without seeing you. I am off to-morrow, and you—you, too, are going. But what a difference—a Gothic university and immortal Rome! Pity me, my dear Chevalier," and I shrugged my shoulders.

"Oh! yes, certainly; I think you are to be pitied."

"And how does the great work go on? Your name is everywhere. I assure you, Prince Besborodko was speaking to me last night of nothing else. By the bye, shall you be at the Opera to-night?"

"I do not know."

"Oh! you must go. I am sorry I have not a box to offer you. But the Baroness', I am sure, is always at your service."

"You are vastly kind."

"'Tis the most charming opera. I think his masterpiece. That divine air—I hum it all day. I do indeed. What a genius! I can bear no one else. Decidedly the greatest composer that ever existed."

"He is certainly very great, and you are no doubt an excellent judge of his style; but the air you meant to hum is an introduction, and by Pacini."

"Is it, indeed! Ah! Italy is the land of music. We men of the north must not speak of it."

"Why is Italy the land of music? Why not Germany?"

"Perhaps music is more cultivated in Germany at present, but do not you think that it is, as it were, more indigenous in Italy?"

"No."

As I never argued, I twirled my cane, and asked his opinion of a new casino.

"Ah! by the bye, is it true, Chevalier, that you have at last agreed to paint the Princess Royal? I tell you what I recommend you seriously to do, most seriously, I assure you most decidedly it is my opinion—most important thing, indeed—should not be neglected a day. Certainly I should not think of going to Italy without doing it."

"Well. Well!"

"Countess Arnfeldt, Chevalier. By heavens she is divine! What a neck, and what a hand! A perfect study."

"Poh!"

"Do not you really think so! Well, I see I am terribly breaking into your morning. Adieu! Let us hope we may soon meet again. Perhaps at Rome; who knows? Au revoir."

I kissed my hand, and tripped out of the room in all the charming fulness of a perfectly graceful manner.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

OUR schoolboy days are looked back to by all with fondness. Oppressed with the cares of life, we contrast our worn and harassed existence with that sweet prime, free from anxiety and fragrant with innocence. I cannot share these feelings. I was a most miserable child; and school I detested more than ever I abhorred the world in the darkest moments of my experienced manhood. But the university—this new life yielded me different feelings, and still commands a grateful reminiscence.

My father, who studied to foster in me every worldly feeling, sought all means which might tend to make me enamoured of that world to which he was devoted. An extravagant allowance, a lavish establishment, many servants, numerous horses, were forced upon rather than solicited by me. According to his system he acted dexterously. My youthful brain could not be insensible to the brilliant position in which I was placed. I was now, indeed, my own master, and everything around me announced that I could command a career flattering to the rising passions of my youth. I well remember the extreme self-complacency with which I surveyed my new apartments; how instantaneously I was wrapped up in all the mysteries of furniture, and how I seemed to have no other purpose in life than to play the honoured and honourable part of an elegant and accomplished host.

My birth, my fortune, my convivial habits, rallied around me the noble and the gay, the flower of our society. Joyously flew our careless hours, while we mimicked the magnificence of men. I had no thought but for the present moment. I discoursed only of dogs and horses, of fanciful habiliments, and curious repasts. I astonished them by a new fashion, and decided upon the exaggerated charms of some ordinary female. How long the novelty of my life would have been productive of interest I know not. An incident occurred which changed my habits.

A new Professor arrived at the university. He was by birth a

German. I attended, by accident, his preliminary lecture on Grecian history. I had been hunting, and had suddenly returned home. Throwing my gown over my forest frock, I strolled, for the sake of change, into the theatre. I nodded with a smile to some of my acquaintance; I glanced with listlessness at their instructor. His abstracted look, the massiness of his skull, his large luminous eye, his long grey hair, his earnest and impassioned manner, struck me. He discoursed on that early portion of Grecian history which is entirely unknown. I was astonished at the fulness of his knowledge. That which to a common student appears but an inexplicable or barren tradition, became, in his magical mould, a record teeming with deep knowledge and picturesque interest. Hordes, who hitherto were only dimly distinguished wandering over the deserts of antiquity, now figured as great nations, multiplying in beautiful cities, and moving in the grand and progressive march of civilisation; and I listened to animated narratives of their creeds, their customs, their manners, their philosophy, and their arts. I was deeply impressed with this mystical creation of a critical spirit. I was charmed with the blended profundity and imagination. I revelled in the sagacious audacity of his revolutionary theories. I yielded to the full spell of his archaic eloquence. The curtain was removed from the sacred shrine of antique ages, and an inspired prophet, ministering in the sanctuary, expounded the mysteries which had perplexed the imperfect intelligence of their remote posterity.

The lecture ceased; I was the first who broke into plaudits; I advanced; I offered to our master my congratulations and my homage. Now that his office had finished I found him the meekest, the most modest and nervous being that ever trembled in society. With difficulty he would receive the respectful compliments of his pupils. He bowed, and blushed, and disappeared. His reserve only interested me the more. I returned to my rooms, musing over the high matters of his discourse. Upon my table was a letter from one of my companions, full of ribald jests. I glanced at its uncongenial lines, and tossed it away unread. I fell into a reverie of Arcadian loveliness. A beautiful temple rose up in my mind like the temple in the picture of Winter. The door opened; a band of loose revellers burst into their accustomed gathering room. I was silent, reserved, cold, moody. Their inane observations amazed me. I shrunk from their hollow tattle and the gibberish of their foul slang. Their unmeaning, idiotic shouts of laughter tortured me. I knew not how to rid myself of their infernal presence. At length one offered me a bet, and I rushed out of the chamber.

I did not stop until I reached the room of the Professor. I

found him buried in his books. He stared at my entrance. I apologised; I told him all I felt—all I wanted; the wretched life I was leading, my deep sympathy with his character, my infinite disgust at my own career, my unbounded love of knowledge, and my admiration of himself.

The simplicity of the Professor's character was not shocked by my frank enthusiasm. Had he been a man of the world he would have been alarmed, lest my strong feeling and unusual conduct should have placed us both in a ridiculous position. On the contrary, without a moment's hesitation, he threw aside his papers and opened his heart to all my wants. My imperfect knowledge of the Greek language was too apparent. Nothing could be done until I mastered it. He explained to me a novel and philosophical mode of acquiring a full acquaintance with it. As we proceeded in our conversation, he occasionally indicated the outlines of his grand system of metaphysics. I was fascinated by the gorgeous prospect of comprehending the unintelligible. The Professor was gratified by the effect that his first effusion had produced, and was interested by the ardour of my mind. He was flattered in finding an enthusiastic votary in one whose mode of life had hitherto promised anything but study, and whose position in society was perhaps an apology, if not a reason, for an irrational career.

I announced to my companions that I was going to read. They stared, they pitied me. Some deemed the avowed affectation, and trusted that increased frolic would repay them for the abstinence of a week of application. Fleming with his books only exhibited a fresh instance of his studied eccentricity. But they were disappointed. I worked at Greek for twelve hours a day, and at the end of a month I had gained an ample acquaintance with the construction of the language, and a fuller one of its signification: so much can be done by an ardent and willing spirit. I had been for six or seven years nominally a Greek student, and had learnt nothing; and how many persons waste even six or seven more and only find themselves in the same position!

I was amply rewarded for my toilsome effort. I felt the ennobling pride of learning. It is a fine thing to know that which is unknown to others; it is still more dignified to remember that we have gained it by our own energies. The struggle after knowledge too is full of delight. The intellectual chace, not less than the material one, brings fresh vigour to our pulses, and infinite palpitations of strange and sweet suspense. The idea that is gained with effort affords far greater satisfaction than that which is acquired with dangerous facility. We dwell with more fondness on the perfume of the flower which we have ourselves tended, than on the odour of that which we cull with carelessness, and cast away

without remorse. The strength and sweetness of our knowledge depend upon the impression which it makes upon our own minds. It is the liveliness of the ideas that it affords which renders research so fascinating, so that a trifling fact or deduction, when discovered or worked out by our own brain, affords us infinitely greater pleasure than a more important truth obtained by the exertions of another.

I thought only of my books, and was happy. I was emancipated from my painful selfism. My days passed in unremitting study. My love of composition unconsciously developed itself. My notebooks speedily filled, and my annotations soon swelled into treatises. Insensibly I had become an author. I wrote with facility, for I was master of my subject. I was fascinated with the expanding of my own mind. I resolved to become a great historical writer. Without intention I fixed upon subjects in which imagination might assist erudition. I formed gigantic schemes which many lives could not have accomplished: yet was I sanguine that I should achieve all. I mused over an original style, which was to blend profound philosophy and deep learning and brilliant eloquence. The nature of man and the origin of nations were to be expounded in glowing sentences of oracular majesty.

Suddenly the University announced a gold medal for the writer of the ablest treatise upon the Dorian people. The subject delighted me; for similar ones had already engaged my notice, and I determined to be a candidate.

I shut myself up from all human beings; I collected all the variety of information that I could glean from the most ancient authors, and the rarest modern treatises. I moulded the crude matter into luminous order. A theory sprang out of the confused mass, like light out of chaos. The moment of composition commenced. I wrote the first sentence while in chapel, and under the influence of music. It sounded like the organ that inspired it. The whole was composed in my head before I committed it to paper—composed in my daily rides, and while pacing my chamber at midnight. The action of my body seemed to lend vitality to my mind.

Never shall I forget the moment when I finished the last sentence of my fair copy, and, sealing it, consigned it with a motto to the Principal. It was finished, and at the very instant my mind seemed exhausted, my power vanished. The excitement had ceased. I dashed into the forest, and, throwing myself under a tree, passed the first of many days that flew away in perfect indolence and vague and unmeaning reverie.

In spite of my great plans, which demanded the devotion of a life, and were to command the admiration of a grateful and

enlightened world, I was so anxious about the fate of my prize essay that all my occupations suddenly ceased. I could do nothing. I could only think of sentences which might have been more musical, and deductions which might have been more logically true. Now that it was finished I felt its imperfectness. Week after week I grew more desponding, and on the very morning of the decision I had entirely discarded all hope.

It was announced: the medal was awarded, and to me. Amid the plaudits of a crowded theatre, I recited my triumphant essay. Full of victory, my confident voice lent additional euphony to the flowing sentence, and my bright firm eye added to the acuteness of my reasoning, and enforced the justice of my theory. I was entirely satisfied. No passage seemed weak. Noble, wealthy, the son of the minister, congratulations came thick upon me. The seniors complimented each other on such an example to the students. I was the idol of the university. The essay was printed, lavishly praised in all the journals, and its author, full of youth and promise, hailed as the future ornament of his country. I returned to my father in a blaze of glory.

CHAPTER II.

I ADDRESSED him with the confidence that I was now a man, and a distinguished man. My awe of his character had greatly worn off. I was most cordial to the Baroness, but a slight strain of condescension was infused into my courtesy. I had long ceased to view her with dislike; on the contrary, I had even become her protégé. That was now over. We were not less warm, but I was now the protector; and if there were a slight indication of pique or a chance ebullition of temper, instead of their calling forth any similar sentiments on my side, I only bowed with deference to her charms, or mildly smiled on the engaging weaknesses of the inferior sex. I was not less self-conceited or less affected than before, but my self-conceit and my affectation were of a nobler nature. I did not consider myself a less finished member of society, but I was also equally proud of being the historiographer of the Dorians. I was never gloomy; I was never in repose. Self-satisfaction sparkled on my countenance, and my carriage was agitated with the earnestness and the excitement with which I busied myself with the trivial and the trite. My father smiled, half with delight and half with humour, upon my growing consciousness of importance, and

introduced me to his friends with increased satisfaction. He even listened to me while, one day after dinner, I disserted upon the Pelasgi, but when he found that I believed in innate ideas he thought that my self-delusion began to grow serious.

As he was one of those men who believe that directly to oppose a person in his opinions is a certain mode of confirming him in his error, he attacked me by a masked battery. Affecting no want of interest in my pursuits, he said to me one day in a very careless tone, "Contarini, I am no great friend to reading, but as you have a taste that way, if I were you, during the vacation, I would turn over Voltaire."

Now I had never read any work of Voltaire's. The truth is, I had no very great opinion of the philosopher of Ferney; for my friend, the Professor, had assured me that Voltaire knew nothing of the Dorians, that his Hebrew also was invariably incorrect, and that he was altogether a very superficial person: but I chanced to follow my father's counsel.

I stood before the hundred volumes; I glanced with indifference upon the wondrous and witching shelf. History, poetry, philosophy, the lucid narrative, and the wild invention, and the unimpassioned truth—they were all before me, and with my ancient weakness for romance I drew out Zadig. Never shall I forget the effect this work produced on me. What I had been long seeking offered itself. This strange mixture of brilliant fantasy and poignant truth, this unrivalled blending of ideal creation and worldly wisdom—it all seemed to speak to my two natures. I wandered a poet in the streets of Babylon, or on the banks of the Tigris. A philosopher and a statesman, I moralised over the condition of man and the nature of government. The style enchanted me. I delivered myself up to the full abandonment of its wild and brilliant grace.

I devoured them all, volume after volume. Morning, and night, and noon, a volume was ever my companion. I ran to it after my meals, it reposed under my pillow. As I read I roared, I laughed, I shouted with wonder and admiration; I trembled with indignation at the fortunes of my race; my bitter smile sympathised with the searching ridicule and withering mockery.

Pedants, and priests, and tyrants; the folios of dunces, the fires of inquisitors, and the dungeons of kings; and the long, dull system of imposture and misrule that had sat like a gloating incubus on the fair neck of Nature; and all our ignorance, and all our weakness, and all our folly, and all our infinite imperfection—I looked round—I thought of the dissertation upon the Dorians, and I considered myself the most contemptible of my wretched species.

I returned to the university. I rallied round me my old

companions, whom I had discarded in a fit of disgusting pedantry—but not now merely to hold high revels. The goblet indeed still circled, but a bust of the author of “Candide” over the head of the president warned us, with a smile of prophetic derision, not to debase ourselves; and if we drank deep, our potations were perhaps necessary to refresh the inexperienced efforts of such novices in philosophy. Yet we made way; even the least literary read the romances, or parts of the Philosophical Dictionary; the emancipation of our minds was rapidly effecting; we entirely disembarrassed ourselves of prejudice; we tried everything by the test of first principles, and finally we resolved ourselves into a secret union for the amelioration of society.

Of this institution I had the honour of being elected president by acclamation. My rooms were the point of meeting. The members were in number twelve, chiefly my equals in rank and fortune. One or two of them were youths of talent, and not wholly untinctured by letters; the rest were ardent, delighted with the novelty of what they did and heard, and, adopting our thoughts, arrived at conclusions the truth of which they did not doubt.

My great reputation at the university long prevented these meetings from being viewed with suspicion, and when the revolutionary nature of our opinions occasionally developed itself in a disregard for the authorities by some of our society, who perhaps considered such licence as the most delightful portion of the new philosophy, my interest often succeeded in stifling a public explosion. In course of time, however, the altered tenor of my own conduct could no longer be concealed. My absence from lectures had long been overlooked, from the conviction that the time thus gained was devoted to the profundity of private study; but the systematic assembly at my rooms of those who were most eminent for their disregard of discipline and their neglect of study could no longer be treated with inattention, and after several intimations from inferior officers, I was summoned to the presence of the High Principal.

This great personage was a clear-headed, cold-minded, unmanageable individual. I could not cloud his intellect or control his purpose. My ever-successful sophistry and my ever-fluent speech failed. At the end of every appeal he recurred to his determination to maintain the discipline of the university, and repeated with firmness that this was the last time our violation of it should be privately noticed. I returned to my rooms in a dark rage. My natural impatience of control and hatred of responsibility, which had been kept off of late years by the fondness for society which developed itself with my growing passions, came back upon me. I cursed authority; I paced my room like Catiline.

At this moment my accustomed companions assembled. They were ignorant of what had passed, but they seemed to me to look like conspirators. Moody and ferocious, I headed the table, and filling a bumper, I drank confusion to all government. They were surprised at such a novel commencement, for in general we only arrived at this great result by the growing and triumphant truths of a long evening; but they received my proposition, as indeed they ever did, with a shout.

The wine warmed me. I told them all. I even exaggerated in my rage the annoying intelligence. I described our pleasant meetings about to cease for ever. I denounced the iniquitous system, which would tear us from the pursuit of real knowledge and ennobling truths—knowledge that illuminated, and truths that should support the destinies of existing man—to the deplorable and disgusting study of a small collection of imperfect volumes, written by Greeks and preserved by Goths. It was bitter to think that we must part. Surely society, cruel society, would too soon sever the sweet and agreeable ties that bound our youth. Why should we ever be parted? Why, in pursuance of an unnatural system, abhorred by all of us—why were we to be dispersed, and sent forth to delude the world in monstrous disguises of priests, and soldiers, and statesmen? Out upon such hypocrisy! A curse light upon the craven knave who would not struggle for his salvation from such a monotonous and degrading doom! The world was before us. Let us seize it in our prime. Let us hasten away; let us form in some inviolate solitude a society founded upon the eternal principles of truth and justice. Let us fly from the feudal system. Nobles and wealthy, let us cast our titles to the winds, and our dross to the earth which produced it. Let us pride ourselves only on the gifts of nature, and exist only on her beneficence.

I ceased, and three loud rounds of cheering announced to the High Principal and all his slaves that we had not yielded.

We drank deep. A proposition came forth with the wine of every glass. We all talked of America. Already we viewed ourselves in a primæval forest, existing by the chase, to which many of us were devoted. The very necessary toil of life seemed, in such an existence, to consist of what in this worn-out world was considered the choicest pastime and the highest pleasure. And the rich climate, and the simple manners, and the intelligible laws, and the fair aborigines who must be attracted by such interesting strangers—all hearts responded to the glowing vision. I alone was grave and thoughtful. The remembrance of Master Frederick and the Venetian expedition, although now looked back to as a childish scrape, rendered me nevertheless the most practical of the party. I saw immediately the invincible difficulty of our reaching with

success such a distant land. I lamented the glorious times when the forests of our own northern land could afford an asylum to the brave and free.

The young Count de Pahlen was a great hunter. Wild in his life and daring in his temper, he possessed at the same time a lively and not uncultivated intellect. He had a great taste for poetry, and, among other accomplishments, was an excellent actor. He rose up as I spoke, like a volcano out of the sea. "I have it, Fleming, I have it!" he shouted, with a dancing eye and exulting voice. "You know the great forest of Jonsterna. Often have I hunted in it. The forest near us is but, as it were, a huge root of that vast woodland. Nearly in its centre is an ancient and crumbling castle, which, like all old ruins, is of course haunted. No peasant dare approach it. At its very mention the face of the forest farmer will grow grave and serious. Let us fly to it. Let us become the scaring ghosts whom all avoid. We shall be free from man—we shall live only for ourselves—we——" but his proposition was drowned in our excited cheers, and rising together, we all pledged a sacred vow to stand or fall by each other in this great struggle for freedom and for nature.

The night passed in canvassing plans to render this mighty scheme practicable. The first point was to baffle all inquiries after our place of refuge, and to throw all pursuers off the scent. We agreed that on a certain day we should take our way, in small and separate parties, by different routes to the old castle, which we calculated was about sixty miles distant. Each man was to bear with him a rifle, a sword, and pistols, a travelling cloak, his knapsack, and as much ammunition as he could himself carry. Our usual hunting dress afforded an excellent uniform, and those who were without it were immediately to supply themselves. We were to quit the university without notice, and each of us on the same day was to write to his friends to notify his sudden departure on a pedestrian tour in Norway. Thus we calculated to gain time and effectually to baffle pursuit.

In spite of our lavish allowances, as it ever happens among young men, money was wanting. All that we possessed was instantly voted a common stock, but several men required rifles, and funds were deficient. I called for a crucible: I opened a cabinet: I drew out my famous gold medal. I gazed at it for a moment, and the classic cheers amid which it had been awarded seemed to rise upon my ear. I dashed away the recollection, and in a few minutes the splendid reward of my profound researches was melting over the fire, and affording the means of our full equipment.

CHAPTER III.

It was the fourth morning of our journey. My companion was Ulric de Brahe. He was my only junior among the band, delicate of frame and affectionate in disposition, though hasty if excited, but my enthusiastic admirer. He was my great friend, and I was almost as intent to support him under the great fatigue, as about the success of our enterprise. In our progress I had bought a donkey of a farmer, and loaded it with a couple of kegs of the brandy of the country. We had travelled the last two days entirely in the forest, passing many farm-houses and several villages, and as we believed were now near our point of rendezvous. I kicked on the donkey before me, and smiled on Ulric. I would have carried his rifle as well as my own, but his ardent temper and devoted love supported him; and when I expressed my anxiety about his toil, he only laughed and redoubled his pace.

We were pushing along on an old turf road cut through the thick woods, when suddenly, at the end of a side vista, I beheld the tower of a castle. "Jonsterna!" I shouted, and I ran forward without the donkey. It was more distant than it appeared; but at length we came to a large piece of clear land, and at the other side of it we beheld the long dreamt of building. It was a vast structure, rather dilapidated than ruined. With delight I observed a human being moving upon the keep, whom I recognised by his uniform to be one of us, and as we approached nearer we distinguished two or three of our co-mates stretched upon the turf. They all jumped up and ran forward to welcome us. How heartily we shook hands, and congratulated each other on our re-union! More than half were already assembled. All had contrived, besides their own equipments, to bring something for the common stock. There was plenty of bread, and brandy, and game. Some were already out collecting wood. Before noon the rest arrived, except Pahlen and his comrade. And they came at last, and we received them with a cheer, for the provident vice-president, like an ancient warrior, was seated in a cart. "Do not suppose that I am done up, my boys," said the gay dog; "I have brought gunpowder."

When we had all assembled we rushed into the castle, and in the true spirit of boyhood examined everything. There was a large knights' hall, covered with tapestry and tattered banners. It was settled that this should be our chief apartment. We even found a huge oak-table and some other rude and ancient furniture. We appointed committees of examination. Some surveyed the

cellars and dungeons, some the out-buildings. We were not afraid of ghosts, but marvellously fearful that we might have been anticipated by some human beings, as wild and less philosophical than ourselves. It was a perfect solitude. We cleared and cleaned out the hall, lighted an immense fire, arranged our stores, appointed their keeper, made beds with our cloaks, piled our arms, and cooked our dinner. An hour after sunset our first meal was prepared, and the Secret Union for the Amelioration of Society resumed their sittings almost in a savage state.

I shall never forget the scene and the proud exultation with which I beheld it—the vast and antique hall, the mystic tapestry moving and moaning with every gust of the windy night, the deep shades of the distant corners, the flickering light flung by the blazing hearth and the huge pine torches, the shining arms, the rude but plenteous banquet, the picturesque revellers, and I, their president, with my sword pressing on a frame ready to dare all things. “This, this is existence!” I exclaimed. “Oh! let us live by our own right arms, and let no law be stronger than our swords!”

I was even surprised by the savage yell of exultation with which my almost unconscious exclamation was received. But we were like young tigers, who, for a moment tamed, had now for the first time tasted blood, and rushed back to their own nature. A band of philosophers, we had insensibly placed ourselves in the most anti-philosophical position. Flying from the feudal system, we had unawares taken refuge in its favourite haunt. All our artificial theories of universal benevolence vanished. We determined to be what fortune had suddenly made us. We discarded the abstract truths which had in no age of the world ever been practised, and were of course therefore impracticable. We smiled at our ignorance of human nature and ourselves. The Secret Union for the Amelioration of Society suddenly turned into a corps of bandits, and their philosophical president was voted their captain.

CHAPTER IV.

It was midnight. They threw themselves upon their rough couches, that they might wake fresh with the morning. Fatigue and brandy in a few minutes made them deep slumberers; but I could not sleep. I flung a log upon the fire, and paced the hall in deep communion with my own thoughts. The Rubicon was

passed. Farewell, my father—farewell, my step-country—farewell, literary invention, maudlin substitute for a poetic life—farewell, effeminate arts of morbid civilisation! From this moment I ceased to be a boy. I was surrounded by human beings, bold and trusty, who looked only to my command, and I was to direct them to danger and guide them through peril. No child's game was this, no ideal play. We were at war, and at war with mankind.

I formed my plans; I organised the whole system. Action must be founded on knowledge. I would have no crude abortive efforts. Our colossal thoughts should not degenerate into a frolic. Before we commenced our career of violence, I was determined that I would have a thorough acquaintance with the country. Every castle and every farm-house should be catalogued. I longed for a map, that I might muse over it like a general. I looked upon our good arms with complacency. I rejoiced that most of us were cunning of fence. I determined that they should daily exercise with the broadsword, and that each should become a dead shot with his rifle. In the perfection of our warlike accomplishments, I sought a substitute for the weakness of our numbers.

The morning at length broke. I was not in the least fatigued. I longed to commence my arrangements. It grew very cold. I slept for an hour. I was the first awake. I determined in future to have a constant guard. I roused Pahlen. He looked fierce in his sleep. I rejoiced in his determined visage. I appointed him my lieutenant. I impressed upon him how much I depended upon his energy. We lighted a large fire, arranged the chamber, and prepared their meal before any woke. I was determined that their resolution should be supported by the comfort which they found around them; I felt that cold and hunger are great sources of cowardice.

They rose in high spirits: everything seemed delightful. The morn appeared only a continuation of the enjoyment of the evening. When they were emboldened by a good meal, I developed to them my plans. I ordered Ulric de Brahe to be first on guard—a duty from which no one was to be exempt but Pahlen and myself. The post was the tower which had given me the first earnest of their fealty in assembling. No one could now approach the castle without being perceived, and we took measures that the guard should be perfectly concealed. Parties were then ordered out in different directions, who were all to bring their report by the evening banquet; Pahlen alone was to repair to a more distant town, and to be absent four days. He took his cart, and we contrived to dress him as like a peasant as our wardrobe would permit. His purpose was to obtain different costumes which were necessary for our enterprise. I remained with two of my men, and worked at the interior arrangements of our dwelling.

Thus passed a week, and each day the courage of my band became more inflamed; they panted for action. We were in want of meal: I determined to attack a farmer's grange on the ensuing eve, and I resolved to head the enterprise myself. I took with me Ulric and three others. We arrived an hour before sunset at the devoted settlement; it had been already well reconnoitred. Robberies in this country were unknown; we had to encounter no precautions. We passed the door of the granary, rifled it, stored our cart, and escaped without a dog barking. We returned two hours before midnight; and the excitement of this evening I shall never forget. All were bursting with mad enthusiasm; I alone looked grave, as if everything depended upon my mind. It was astonishing what an influence this assumption of seriousness, in the midst of their wild mirth, already exercised upon my companions. I was, indeed, their chief; they placed in me unbounded confidence, and almost viewed me as a being of another order.

I sent off Pahlen the next day, in the disguise of a pedlar, to a neighbouring village. The robbery was the topic of general conversation; everybody was astounded, and no one was suspected. I determined, however, not to hazard in a hurry another enterprise in the neighbourhood. We wanted nothing except wine. Our guns each day procured us meat, and the farmer's meal was a plentiful source of bread. Necessity develops much talent: already one of our party was pronounced an excellent cook; and the last fellow in the world we should ever have suspected put an old oven into perfect order, and turned out a most ingenious mechanic.

It was necessary to make a diversion in a distant part of the forest. I sent out my lieutenant with a strong party; they succeeded in driving home from a very rich farm four cows in milk. This was a great addition to our luxuries; and Pahlen, remaining behind, paid in disguise an observatory visit to another village in the vicinity, and brought us home the gratifying intelligence that it was settled that the robbers were a party from a town far away, on the other side of the forest.

These cases of petty plundering prepared my band for the deeper deeds which I always contemplated. Parties were now out for days together. We began to be familiar with every square mile of country. Through this vast forest land, but a great distance from the castle, ran a high-road, on which there was much traffic. One evening, as Ulric and myself were prowling in this neighbourhood, we perceived a band of horsemen approaching; they were cloth-merchants returning from a great fair, eight in number, but only one or two armed, and merely with pistols. A cloth-merchant's pistol, that had been probably loaded for years, and was borne, in all likelihood, by a man who would tremble at its own fire,

did not appear a very formidable weapon. The idea occurred to both of us simultaneously. We put on our masks, and one of us ran out from each side of the road, and seized the bridle of the foremost horseman. I never saw a man so astonished in my life; he was perhaps even more astonished than afraid; but we gave them no time. I can scarcely describe the scene. There was dismounting, and the opening of saddle-bags, and the clinking of coin. I remember wishing them good night in the civilest tone possible, and then we were alone.

I stared at Ulric—Ulric stared at me, and then we burst into a loud laugh, and danced about the road. I quite lost my presence of mind, and rejoiced that no one but my favourite friend was present to witness my unheroic conduct. We had a couple of forest ponies, that we had driven home one day from a friendly farmer, tied up in an adjoining wood. We ran to them, jumped on, and scampered away without stopping for five or six hours—at least I think so, for it was an hour after sunset before the robbery was committed, and it was the last hour of the moon before we reached our haunt.

“The captain has come! the captain has come!” was a sound that always summoned my band. Fresh faggots were thrown on the fire—beakers of wine and brandy placed on the table. I called for Pahlen and my pipe, flung myself on my seat, and, dashing the purses upon the board, “Here,” said I, “my boys! here is our first gold!”

CHAPTER V.

THIS affair of the cloth-merchants made us quite mad; four parties were stopped in as many days. For any of our companions to return without booty, or, what was much more prized, without an adventure, was considered flat treason. Our whole band was now seldom assembled. The travellers to the fair were a never-failing source of profit. Each day we meditated bolder exploits; and, understanding that a wedding was about to take place in a neighbouring castle, I resolved to surprise the revellers in their glory, and capture the bride.

One evening as, seated in an obscure corner of the hall, I was maturing my plans for this great achievement, and most of my companions were assembled at their meal, Pahlen unexpectedly returned. He was evidently much fatigued; he panted for breath; he was covered with sweat and dirt; his dress was torn and soiled;

he reached the table with staggering steps; and, seizing a mighty flask of Rhenish, emptied it at a draught.

"Where is the captain?" he anxiously inquired.

I advanced; he seized me by the arm, and led me out of the chamber.

"A strong party of police and military have entered the forest; they have taken up their quarters at a town not ten miles off; their orders to discover our band are peremptory; every spot is to be searched, and the castle will be the first. I have fought my way through the uncut woods. You must decide to-night. What will you do?"

"Their strength?"

"A company of infantry, a party of rangers, and a sufficiently stout body of police. Resistance is impossible."

"It seems so."

"And escape, unless we fly at once. To-morrow we shall be surrounded."

"The devil!"

"I wish to Heaven we were once more in your rooms, Fleming!"

"Why, it would be as well. But, for heaven's sake, be calm! If we waver, what will the rest do? Let us summon our energies. Is concealment impossible? The dungeons?"

"Every hole will most assuredly be searched."

"An ambush might destroy them. We must fight, if they run us to bay."

"Poh!"

"Blow up the castle, then?"

"And ourselves?"

"Well?"

"Heavens! what a madman you are! It was all you, Fleming, that got us into this infernal scrape. Why the devil should we become robbers, whom society has evidently intended only to be robbed?"

"You are poignant, Pahlen. Come, let us to our friends." I took him by the arm, and we entered the hall together.

"Gentlemen," I said, "my lieutenant brings important intelligence. A strong party of military and police have entered the forest to discover and secure us; they are twenty to one, and therefore too strong for open combat. The castle cannot stand an hour's siege, and an ambush, although it might prove successful, and gain us time, will eventually only render our escape more difficult, and our stay here impossible. I propose, therefore, that we should disperse for a few days, and, before our departure, take heed that no traces of recent residence are left in this building. If we succeed in

baffling their researches, we can again assemble here; or, which I conceive will be more prudent and more practicable, meet once more only to arrange our plans for our departure to another and a more distant country. We have ample funds; we can purchase a ship. Mingling with the crew as amateurs, we shall soon gain sufficient science. A new career is before us. The Baltic leads to the Mediterranean. Think of its blue waters and beaming skies—its archipelagoes and picturesque inhabitants. We have been bandits in a northern forest; let us now become pirates on a southern sea!”

No sympathetic cheer followed this eloquent appeal; there was a deep, dull, dead, dismal silence. I watched them narrowly; all looked with fixed eyes upon the table. I stood with folded arms; the foot of Pahlen nervously patting against the ground was the only sound. At length, one by one, each dared to gaze upon another, and tried to read his fellow's thoughts; they could, without difficulty, detect the lurking but terrible alarm.

“Well, gentlemen,” I said, “time presses; I still trust I am your captain?”

“O Fleming, Fleming,” exclaimed the cook, with a broken voice and most piteous aspect, and dropping my title, which hitherto had been scrupulously observed; “how can you go on so! It is quite dreadful!”

There was an assenting murmur.

“I am sure,” continued the artist, whom I always knew to be the greatest coward of the set; “I am sure I never thought it would come to this. I thought it was only a frolic. I have got led on I am sure I do not know how. But you have such a way! What will our fathers think? Robbers! How horrible! And then suppose we are shot! O Lord! what will our mothers say! And after all we are only a parcel of boys, and did it out of fun. Oh! what shall I do?”

The grave looks with which this comic ebullition was received, proved that the sentiments, however undignified in their delivery, were congenial to the band. The orator was emboldened by not being laughed at for the first time in his life, and proceeded—

“I am sure I think we had better give ourselves up, and then our families might get us through: we can tell the truth; we can say we only did it for fun, and can give up the money, and as much more as they like. I do not think they would hang us. Do you? Oh!”

“The devil take the hindmost,” said the young Count Bornholm, rising, “I am off. It will go hard if they arrest me, because I am out sporting with my gun; and if they do I will give them my name, and then I should like to see them stop me.”

"That will be best," all eagerly exclaimed and rose. "Let us all disperse, each alone with his gun."

"Let us put out the fire," said the cook; "they may see the light."

"What, without windows?" said Bornholm.

"Oh! these police see everything. What shall I do with the kettles? We shall all get detected. To think it should come to this! Shot, perhaps hung! Oh!"

"Throw everything down the well," said Pahlen; "money and all."

Now I knew it was over. I had waited to hear Pahlen's voice, and I now saw it was all up. I was not sorry. I felt the inextricable difficulties in which we were involved, and what annoyed me most was, that I had hitherto seen no mode of closing my part with dignity.

"Gentlemen," I said, "as long as you are within these walls I am still your captain. You desert me, but I will not disgrace you. Fly then—fly to your schools and homes, to your affectionate parents and your dutiful tutors. I should have known with whom I leagued myself. I at least am not a boy, and although now a leader without followers, I will still, for the honour of my race and of the world in which we breathe, I will still believe that I may find trustier bosoms, and pursue a more eminent career."

Ulric de Brahe rushed forward and placed himself by my side—"Fleming," he said, "I will never desert you!"

I pressed his hand with the warmth it deserved, but the feeling of solitude had come over me. I wished to be alone. "No, Ulric," I replied, "we must part. I will tie no one to my broken fortunes. And, my friends all, let us not part in bitterness. Excuse me, if in a moment of irritation I said aught that was unkind to those I love, depreciating to those whose conduct I have ever had cause to admire. Some splendid hours we have passed together, some brief moments of gay revel, and glorious daring, and sublime peril. We must part. I will believe that our destiny, and not our will, separates us. My good sword," I exclaimed, and I drew it from the scabbard, "in future you shall belong to the bravest of the brave," and kissing it, I presented it to Pahlen. "And now one brimming cup to the past. Pledge me all, and in spite of every danger, with a merry face."

Each man quaffed the goblet till it was dry, and performed the supernaculum, and then I walked to a distant part of the hall, whispering as I passed Pahlen, "See that everything necessary is done."

The castle well was the general receptacle for all our goods and plunder. In a few minutes the old hall presented almost the same

appearance as on our arrival. The fire was extinguished. Everything disappeared. By the light of a solitary torch, each man took his rifle, and his knapsack, and his cloak, and then we were about to disperse. I shook hands with each. Ulric de Brahe lingered behind, and once more whispered his earnest desire to accompany me. But I forbade him, and he quitted me rather irritated.

I was alone. In a few minutes, when I believed that all had gone forth, I came out. Ere I departed, I stopped before the old castle, and gazed upon it—grey in the moonlight. The mighty pines rose tall and black into the dark blue air. All was silent. The beauty and the stillness blended with my tumultuous emotions, and in a moment I dashed into poetry. Forgetting the imminent danger in which my presence on this spot, even my voice, might involve me, I poured forth my passionate farewell to the wild scene of my wilder life. I found a fierce solace in this expression of my heart. I discovered a substitute for the excitement of action in the excitement of thought. Deprived of my castle and my followers, I fled to my ideal world for refuge. There I found them, a forest far wilder and more extensive, a castle far more picturesque and awful, a band infinitely more courageous and more true. My imagination supported me under my whelming mortification. Crowds of characters, and incidents, and passionate scenes, clustered into my brain. Again I acted—again I gave the prompt decision—again I supplied the never-failing expedient—again we revelled, fought, and plundered.

It was midnight, when, wrapping himself in his cloak, and making a bed of fern, the late Lord of Jonsterna betook himself to his solitary slumber beneath the wide canopy of heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

I ROSE with the sun, and the first thought that occurred to me was to write a tragedy. The castle in the forest, the Protean Pahlen, the tender-hearted Ulric, the craven cook, who was to be the traitor to betray the all-interesting and marvellous hero, myself—here was material. What soliloquies—what action—what variety of character! I threw away my cloak, it wearied me, and walked on, waving my arm, and spouting a scene. I longed for the moment that I could deliver to an imperishable scroll these vivid creations of my fancy. I determined to make my way to the

nearest town and record these strong conceptions, ere the fire of my feelings died away. I was suddenly challenged by the advance guard of a party of soldiers. They had orders to stop all travellers, and bring them to their commanding officer. I accordingly repaired to their chief.

I had no fear as to the result. I should affect to be a travelling student, and, in case of any difficulty, I had determined to confide my name to the officer. But this was unnecessary. I went through my examination with such a confident air, that nothing was suspected, and I was permitted to proceed. This was the groundwork for a new incident, and in the third act I instantly introduced a visit in disguise to the camp of the enemy.

I refreshed myself at a farm-house, where I found some soldiers billeted. I was amused with being the subject of their conversation and felt my importance. As I thought, however, it was but prudent to extricate myself from the forest without any unnecessary loss of time, I took my way towards its skirts, and continued advancing in that direction for several days, until I found myself in a district with which I was unacquainted. I had now gained the open country. Emerging from the straggling woodland one afternoon about an hour before sunset, I found myself in a highly cultivated and beautiful land. A small but finely-formed lake spread before me covered with wild fowl. On its opposite side rose a gentle acclivity richly wooded and crowned by a magnificent castle. The declining sun shed a beautiful warm light over the proud building, and its parks and gardens, and the surrounding land, which was covered with orchards and small fields of tall golden grain.

The contrast of all this civilisation and beauty with the recent scene of my savage existence was very striking. I leant in thought upon my rifle, and it occurred to me that, in my dark work, although indeed its characteristic was the terrible, there too should be something sunny, and fresh, and fair. For if in nature and in life man finds these changes so delightful, so also should it be in the ideal and the poetic. And the thought of a heroine came into my mind. And while my heart was softened by the remembrance of woman, and the long-repressed waters of my passionate affections came gushing through the stern rocks that had so long beat them away, a fanciful and sparkling equipage appeared advancing at a rapid pace to the castle. A light and brilliant carriage, drawn by four beautiful grey horses, and the chasseur in an hussar dress, and the caracoling outriders, announced a personage of distinction. They advanced; the road ran by my feet. As they approached I perceived that there was only a lady in the carriage. I could not distinguish much, but my heart was prophetic of her charms. The carriage

was within five yards of me. Never had I beheld so beautiful and sumptuous a creature. A strange feeling came over me, the carriage and the riders suddenly stopped, and its mistress, starting from her seat, exclaimed, almost shouted, "Contarini! surely, Contarini!"

CHAPTER VII.

I RUSHED forward; I seized her extended hand; the voice called back the sweetness of the past; my memory struggled through the mist of many years—"Christiana!"

I had seen her once or twice since the golden age of our early loves, but not of late. I had heard, too, that she had married, and heard it with a pang. Her husband, Count Norberg, I now learnt, was the lord of the castle before us. I gave a hurried explanation of my presence—a walking tour, a sporting excursion, anything did, while I held her sweet hand, and gazed upon her sparkling face.

I gave my gun and knapsack to an attendant, and jumped into the carriage. So many questions uttered in so kind a voice—I never felt happier. Our drive lasted only a few minutes, yet it was long enough for Christiana to tell me a thousand times how rejoiced she was to meet me, and how determined that I should be her guest.

We dashed through the castle gates. Alighting, I led her through the hall, up the lofty staircase, and into a suite of saloons. No one was there. She ran with me up stairs, would herself point out to me my room, and was wild with glee. "I have not time to talk now, Contarini. We dine in an hour. I will dress as fast as I can, and then we shall meet in the drawing-room."

I was alone, and throwing myself into a chair, uttered a deep sigh. It even surprised me, for I felt at this moment very happy. The servant entered with my limited wardrobe. I tried to make myself look as much like a man of the world and as little like a bandit as possible; but I was certainly more picturesque than splendid. When I had dressed I forgot to descend, and leant over the mantel-piece, gazing on the empty stove. The remembrance of my boyhood overpowered me. I thought of the garden in which we had first met, of her visit to me in the dark to solace my despair: I asked myself why in her presence everything seemed beautiful, and I felt happy?

Some one tapped at the door. "Are you ready?" said the

voice of voices. I opened the door, and taking her hand, we exchanged looks of joyful love, and descended together.

We entered the saloon. She led me up to a middle-aged but graceful personage; she introduced me to her husband as the oldest and dearest of her friends. There were several other gentlemen in the room who had come to enjoy the chase with their host, but no ladies. We dined at a round table, and I was seated by Christiana. The conversation ran almost entirely on the robbers, of whom I heard the most romantic and ridiculous accounts. I asked the Countess how she should like to be the wife of a bandit chief?

"I hardly know what I should do," she answered playfully, "were I to meet with some of those interesting ruffians of whom we occasionally read; but I fear, in this age of reality, these sentimental heroes would be difficult to discover."

"Yes; I have no doubt," said a young nobleman opposite, "that if we could detect this very captain, of whom we have daily heard such interesting details, we should find him to be nothing better than a decayed innkeeper, or a broken subaltern at the best."

"You think so?" I replied. "In this age we are prone to disbelieve in the extraordinary, as we were once eager to credit it. I differ from you about the subject of our present discussion, nor do I believe him to be by any means a common character."

My remark attracted general observation. I spoke in a confident but slow and serious tone. I wished to impress on Christiana that I was no longer a child.

"But may I ask on what grounds you have formed your opinion?" said the Count.

"Principally upon my own observation," I replied.

"Your own observation!" exclaimed mine host. "What, have you seen him?"

"Yes."

They would have thought me joking had I not looked so grave, but my serious air ill accorded with their smiles.

"I was with him in the forest," I continued, "and held considerable conversation with him. I even accompanied him to his haunt, and witnessed his assembled band."

"Are you serious!" all exclaimed. The Countess was visibly interested.

"But were you not very much frightened?" she inquired.

"Why should I be frightened?" I answered; "a solitary student offered but poor prey. He would have passed me unnoticed had I not sought his acquaintance, and he was a sufficiently good judge of human nature speedily to discover that I was not likely to betray him."

"And what sort of a man is he?" asked the young noble. Is he young?"

"Very."

"Well, I think this is the most extraordinary incident that ever happened!" observed the Count.

"It is most interesting," added the Countess.

"Whatever may be his rank or appearance, it is all up with him by this time," remarked an old gentleman.

"I doubt it," I replied, mildly, but firmly.

"Doubt it! I tell you what, if you were a little older, and knew this forest as well as I do, you would see that his escape is impossible. Never were such arrangements. There is not a square foot of ground that will not be scoured, and stations left on every cross road. I was with the commanding officer only yesterday. He cannot escape."

"He cannot escape," echoed a hitherto silent guest, who was a great sportsman. "I will bet any sum he is taken before the week is over."

"If it would not shock our fair hostess, Count Prater," I rejoined, "rest assured you should forfeit your stake."

My host and his guests exchanged looks, as if to ask each other who was this very young man who talked with such coolness on such very extraordinary subjects. But they were not cognisant of the secret cause of this exhibition. I wished to introduce myself as a man to the Countess. I wished her to associate my name with something of a more exalted nature than our nursery romance. I did not, indeed, desire that she should conceive that I was less sensible to her influence, but I was determined she should feel that her influence was exercised over no ordinary being. I felt that my bold move had already in part succeeded. I more than once caught her eye, and read the blended feeling of astonishment and interest with which she listened to me.

"Well, perhaps he may not be taken in a week," said the betting Count Prater; "it would be annoying to lose my wager by an hour."

"Say a fortnight, then," said the young nobleman.

"A fortnight, a year, an age, what you please," I observed.

"You will bet, then, that he will not be taken?" said Count Prater, eagerly.

"I will bet that the expedition retires in despair," I replied.

"Well, what shall it be?" asked the Count, feeling that he had an excellent bet, and yet fearful, from my youthful appearance, that our host might deem it but delicate to insure its being a light one.

"Oh! what you please," I replied; "I seldom bet, but when I do, I care not how high the stake may be."

"Five or fifty, or, if you please, five hundred dollars," suggested the Count.

"Five thousand, if you like."

"We are very moderate here, baron," said our host, with a smile. "You university heroes frighten us."

"Well, then," I exclaimed, pointing to the Countess' left arm, "you see this ruby bracelet? the loser shall supply its fellow."

"Bravo!" said the young nobleman; and Prater was forced to consent.

A great many questions were now asked about the robbers, as to the nature and situation of their haunt—their numbers—their conduct. To all these queries I replied with as much detail as was safe, but with the air of one who was resolved not in any way to compromise the wild outlaw, who had established his claim to be considered a man of honour.

In the evening the count and his friends sat down to cards, and I walked up and down the saloon in conversation with Christiana. I found her manner to me greatly changed since the morning. She was evidently more constrained; evidently she felt that in her previous burst of cordiality she had forgotten that time might have changed me more than it had her. I spoke to her little of home. I did not indulge in the details of domestic tattle; I surprised her by the wild and gloomy tone in which I mentioned myself and my fortunes. I mingled with my reckless prospect of the future the bitterest sarcasms on my present lot; and, when I almost alarmed her by my malignant misanthropy, I darted into a train of gay nonsense or tender reminiscences, and piqued her by the easy and rapid mode in which my temper seemed to shift from morbid sensibility to callous mockery.

CHAPTER VIII.

I RETIRED to my room, and wrote a letter to my servant at the university, directing him to repair to Norberg Castle with my horses and wardrobe. The fire blazed brightly; the pen was fresh and brisk; the idea rushed into my head in a moment, and I commenced my tragedy. I had already composed the first scene in my head. The plot was simple, and had been finally arranged while walking up and down the saloon with the Countess. A bandit chief falls in love with the wife of a rich noble, the governor of the province which is the scene of his ravages. I sat up nearly all

night in fervid composition. I wrote with greater facility than before, because my experience of life was so much increased that I had no difficulty in making my characters think and act. There was, indeed, little art in my creation, but there was much vitality.

I rose very late, and found that the chace had long ago called forth my fellow guests. I could always find amusement in musing over my next scene, and I sauntered forth, almost unconscious of what I did. I found Christiana in a very fanciful flower garden. She was bending down tending a favourite plant. My heart beat, my spirit seemed lighter; she heard my step, she raised her smiling face, and gave me a flower.

"Ah! does not this remind you," I said, "of a spot of early days? I should grieve if you had forgotten the scene of our first acquaintance."

"The dear garden house," exclaimed Christiana, with an arch smile. "Never shall I forget it. O Contarini, what a little boy you were then!"

We wandered about together till the noon had long passed, talking of old times, and then we entered the castle for rest. She was as gay as a young creature in spring, but I was grave, though not gloomy. I listened to her musical voice. I watched the thousand ebullitions of her beaming grace. I could not talk. I could only assent to her cheerful observations, and repose in peaceful silence, full of tranquil joy. The morning died away; the hunters returned; we re-assembled to talk over their day's exploits, and speculate on the result of my bet with Count Prater.

No tidings were heard of the robbers; nearly every observation of yesterday was repeated. It was a fine specimen of rural conversation. They ate keenly, they drank freely, and I rejoiced when they were fairly seated again at their card-table, and I was once more with Christiana.

I was delighted when she quitted the harp and seated herself at the piano. I care little for a melodious voice, as it gives me no ideas, but instrumental music is a true source of inspiration; and as Christiana executed the magnificent overture of a great German master, I moulded my feelings of the morning into a scene, and, when I again found myself in my room, I recorded it with facility, or only with a degree of difficulty with which it was exhilarating to contend.

At the end of three days my servant arrived, and gave me the first intimation that myself and my recent companions were expelled, for which I cared as little as for their gold medal.

Three weeks flew away, distinguished by no particular incident, excepting the loss of his gage by Count Prater, and my manifold

care that he should redeem it. The robbers could not in any manner be traced, although Jonsterna afforded some indications. The wonder increased and was universal, and my exploits afforded a subject for a pamphlet, the cheapness of whose price, the publisher earnestly impressed upon us, could only be justified by its extensive circulation.

Three weeks had flown away, three sweet weeks, and flown away in the almost constant presence of Christiana, or in scarcely less delightful composition. My tragedy was finished. I resolved to return home; I longed to bring my reputation to the test; yet I lingered about Christiana.

I lingered about her, as the young bird about the first sunny fruit his inexperienced love dare not touch. I was ever with her, and each day grew more silent. I joined her, exhausted by composition. In her presence I sought refreshing solace, renewed inspiration. I spoke little, for one feeling alone occupied my being, and even of that I was not cognisant, for its nature to me was indefinite and indistinct, although its power was constant and irresistible. But I avenged myself for this strange silence when I was once more alone, and my fervid page teemed with the imaginary passion, of whose reality my unpractised nature was not even yet convinced.

One evening, as we were walking together in the saloon, and she was expressing her wish that I would remain, and her wonder as to the necessity of my returning, which I described as so imperative, suddenly, and in the most unpremeditated manner, I made her the confidant of my literary secret. I was charmed with the temper in which she received it, and the deep and serious interest which she expressed in my success. "Do you know," she added, "Contarini, you will think it very odd, but I have always believed that you were intended for a poet."

My sparkling eye, sparkling with hope and affection, thanked her for her sympathy, and it was agreed that, on the morrow, I should read to her my production.

I was very nervous when I commenced. This was the first time that my composition had been submitted to a human being, and now this submission was to take place in the presence of the author, and through the medium of his voice. As I proceeded, I grew rather more assured. The interest which Christiana really found, or affected to find, encouraged me. If I hesitated, she said, "Beautiful!" whenever I paused, she exclaimed, "Interesting!" My voice grew firmer; the interest which I myself took banished my false shame; I grew excited; my modulated voice impressed my sentiments, and my action sometimes explained them. The robber scene was considered wonderful and full of life and nature. Christiana marvelled how I could have

invented such extraordinary things and characters. At length I came to my heroine. Her beauty was described in an elaborate and far too poetic passage. It was a perfect fac-simile of the Countess. It was ridiculous. She herself felt it, and, looking up, smiled with a faint blush.

I had now advanced into the very heart of the play, and the scenes of sentiment had commenced. I had long since lost my irresolution. The encouragement of Christiana, and the delight which I really felt in my writing, made me more than bold. I really acted before her. She was susceptible. All know how easy it is for a very indifferent drama, if well performed, to soften even the callous. Her eyes were suffused with tears; my emotion was also visible. I felt like a man brought out of a dungeon, and groping his way in the light. How could I have been so blind when all was so evident? It was not until I had recited to Christiana my fictitious passion, that I had become conscious of my real feelings. I had been ignorant all this time that I had been long fatally in love with her. I threw away my manuscript, and, seizing her hand, "O, Christiana!" I exclaimed, "what mockery is it thus to veil truth? Before you is the leader of the band of whom you have heard so much. He adores you."

She started—I cannot describe the beautiful consternation of her countenance.

"Contarini," she exclaimed, "are you mad! what can you mean?"

"Mean!" I poured forth; "is it doubtful? Yes! I repeat I am the leader of that band, whose exploits have so recently alarmed you. Cannot you now comprehend the story of my visiting their haunt? Was it probable, was it possible, that I should have been permitted to gain their secret and to retire? The robbers were youths like myself, weary of the dull monotony of our false and wretched life. We have yielded to overwhelming force, but we have baffled all pursuit. For myself, I quit for ever a country I abhor. Ere a year has passed I shall roam a pirate on the far waves of the Ægean. One tie only binds me to this rigid clime. In my life I have loved only one being. I look upon her. Yes! yes! it is you, Christiana. On the very brink of my exile Destiny has brought us once more together. Oh! let us never part! Be mine—be mine! Share with me my glory, my liberty, and my love!"

I poured forth this rhapsody with impassioned haste. The Countess stared with blank astonishment. She appeared even alarmed. Suddenly she sprang up and ran out of the room.

CHAPTER IX.

I WAS enraged, and I was confused. I do not know whether I felt more shame or more irritation. My vanity impelled me to remain some time with the hope that she would return. She did not, and seizing my tragedy, I rushed into the park. I met my servant exercising a horse. I sent him back to the castle alone, jumped on my steed, and in a few minutes was galloping along the high road to the metropolis.

It was about one hundred miles distant. When I reached home, I found that my father and the Baroness were in the country. I was not sorry to be alone, as I really had returned without any object, and had not, in any degree, prepared myself to meet my father. After some consideration, I enclosed my tragedy to an eminent publisher, and I sent it him from a quarter whence he could gain no clue as to its source. I pressed him for a reply without unnecessary loss of time, and he, unlike these gentry, who really think themselves far more important personages than those by whose wits they live, was punctual. In the course of a week he returned me my manuscript, with his compliments, and an extract from the letter of his principal critic, in which my effusion was described as a laboured exaggeration of the most unnatural features of the German school. On the day I received it my father also arrived.

He was alone, and had merely come up to town to transact business. He was surprised to see me, but said nothing of my expulsion, although I felt confident that he must be aware of it. We dined together alone. He talked to me at dinner of indifferent subjects—of alterations at his castle, and the state of Europe. As I wished to conciliate him, I affected to take great interest in this latter topic, and I thought that he seemed pleased with the earnest readiness with which I interfered in the discussion. After dinner he remarked very quietly, filling his glass, “Had you communicated with me, Contarini, I could perhaps have saved you the disgrace of expulsion.”

I was quite taken by surprise, and looked very confused. At last I said, “I fear, sir, I have occasioned you too often great mortification; but I sometimes cannot refrain from believing that I may yet make a return to you for all your goodness.”

“Everything depends upon yourself, Contarini. You have elected to be your own master. You must take the consequences of your courage or your rashness. What are your plans? I do

not know whether you mean to honour me with your confidence as a friend. I do not even aspire to the authority of a father."

"Oh! pray, sir, do not say so. I place myself entirely at your disposal. I desire nothing more ardently than to act under your command. I assure you that you will find me a very different person from what you imagine. I am impressed with a most earnest and determined resolution to become a practical man. You must not judge of me by my boyish career. The very feelings that made me revolt at the discipline of schools will insure my subordination in the world. I took no interest in their petty pursuits, and their minute legislation interfered with my more extended views."

"What views?" asked my father, with a smile.

I was somewhat puzzled, but I answered, "I wish, sir, to influence men."

"But before you influence others you must learn to influence yourself. Now those who would judge, perhaps imperfectly, of your temperament, Contarini, would suppose that its characteristic was a nature so headstrong and imprudent, that it could not fail of involving its possessor in many dangerous and sometimes even in very ridiculous positions."

I was silent, with my eyes fixed on the ground.

"I think you have sufficient talents for all that I could reasonably desire, Contarini," continued my father; "I think you have talents indeed for anything—anything, I mean, that a rational being can desire to attain; but you sadly lack judgment. I think that you are the most imprudent person with whom I ever was acquainted. You have a great enemy, Contarini, a great enemy in yourself. You have a great enemy in your imagination. I think if you could control your imagination you might be a great man."

"It is a fatal gift, Contarini; for when possessed in its highest quality and strength what has it ever done for its votaries? What were all those great poets of whom we now talk so much, what were they in their lifetime? The most miserable of their species. Depressed, doubtful, obscure, or involved in petty quarrels and petty persecutions; often unappreciated, utterly uninfluential, beggars, flatterers of men unworthy even of their recognition—what a train of disgusting incidents, what a record of degrading circumstances, is the life of a great poet! A man of great energies aspires that they should be felt in his lifetime, that his existence should be rendered more intensely vital by the constant consciousness of his multiplied and multiplying power. Is posthumous fame a substitute for all this? Viewed in every light, and under every feeling, it is alike a mockery. Nay, even try the greatest by this test, and what is the result? Would you rather have been Homer

or Julius Cæsar, Shakspeare or Napoleon? No one doubts. Moralists may cloud truth with every possible adumbration of cant, but the nature of our being gives the lie to all their assertions. We are active beings, and our sympathy, above all other sympathies, is with great action.

“Remember, Contarini, that all this time I am taking for granted that you may be a Homer. Let us now recollect that it is perhaps the most improbable incident that can occur. The high poetic talent,—as if to prove that a poet is only, at the best, a wild although beautiful error of nature,—the high poetic talent is the rarest in creation. What you have felt is what I have felt myself,—is what all men have felt: it is the consequence of our native and inviolate susceptibility. As you advance in life and become more callous, more acquainted with man and with yourself, you will find it even daily decrease. Mix in society and I will answer that you lose your poetic feeling; for in you, as in the great majority, it is not a creative faculty originating in a peculiar organisation, but simply the consequence of a nervous susceptibility that is common to all.”

I suspected very much that my father had stumbled on the unhappy romance of the Wild Hunter of Rodenstein, which I had left lying about my drawers, but I said nothing. He proceeded—

“The time has now arrived which may be considered a crisis in your life. You have, although very young, resolved that society should consider you a man. No preparatory situation can now veil your indiscretions. A youth at the University may commit outrages with impunity, which will affix a lasting prejudice on a person of the same age who has quitted the University. I must ask you again, what are your plans?”

“I have none, sir, except your wishes. I feel acutely the truth of all you have observed. I assure you I am as completely and radically cured of any predisposition that, I confess, I once conceived I possessed for literary invention, as even you could desire. I will own to you that my ambition is very great. I do not think that I should find life tolerable, unless I were in an eminent position, and conscious that I deserved it. Fame, although not posthumous fame, is, I feel, necessary to my felicity. In a word, I wish to devote myself to affairs; I attend only your commands.”

“If it meet your wishes, I will appoint you my private secretary. The post, particularly when confirmed by the confidence which must subsist between individuals connected as we are, is the best school for public affairs. It will prepare you for any office.”

“I can conceive nothing more delightful. You could not have fixed upon an appointment more congenial to my feelings. To be your constant companion, in the slightest degree to alleviate the

burden of your labours, to be considered worthy of your confidence; this is all that I could desire. I only fear that my ignorance of routine may at first inconvenience you, but trust me, dear father, that, if devotion and the constant exertion of any talents I may possess can aid you, they will not be wanting. Indeed—indeed, sir, you never shall repent your goodness.”

This same evening I consigned my tragedy to the flames.

CHAPTER X.

I DEVOTED myself to my new pursuits with as much fervour as I had done to the study of Greek. The former secretary initiated me in the mysteries of routine business. My father, although he made no remark, was evidently pleased at the facility and quickness with which I attained this formal but necessary information. Vattel and Martens were my private studies. I was greatly interested with my novel labours. Foreign policy opened a dazzling vista of splendid incident. It was enchanting to be acquainted with the secrets of European cabinets, and to control or influence their fortunes. A year passed with more satisfaction than any period of my former life. I had become of essential service to my father. My talent for composition found full exercise, and afforded him great aid in drawing up state papers and manifestoes, despatches and decrees. We were always together. I shared his entire confidence. He instructed me in the characters of the public men who surrounded us, and of those who were more distant. I was astonished at the scene of intrigue that opened on me. I found that in some even of his colleagues I was only to perceive secret enemies, and in others but necessary tools and tolerated incumbrances. I delighted in the danger, the management, the negotiation, the suspense, the difficult gratification of his high ambition.

Intent as he was to make me a great statesman, he was scarcely less anxious that I should become a finished man of the world. He constantly impressed upon me that society was a politician's great tool, and the paramount necessity of cultivating its good graces. He afforded me an ample allowance. He encouraged me in a lavish expenditure. Above all, he was ever ready to dilate upon the character of women; and, while he astonished me by the tone of depreciation in which he habitually spoke of them, he would even magnify their influence, and the necessity of securing it.

I modelled my character upon that of my father. I imbibed his deep worldliness. With my usual impetuosity I even exaggerated it. I recognised self-interest as the spring of all action. I received it as a truth, that no man was to be trusted, and no woman to be loved. I gloried in secretly believing myself the most callous of men, and that nothing could tempt me to compromise my absorbing selfishness. I laid it down as a principle, that all considerations must yield to the gratification of my ambition. The ardour and assiduity with which I fulfilled my duties and prosecuted my studies had rendered me, at the end of two years, a very skilful politician. My great fault, as a man of affairs, was that I was too fond of patronising charlatans, and too ready to give every adventurer credit for great talents. The moment a man started a new idea my active fancy conjured up all the great results, and conceived that his was equally prophetic. But here my father's severe judgment and sharp experience always interfered for my benefit, and my cure was assisted by hearing a few of my black swans cackle instead of chant. As a member of society I was entirely exempt from the unskilful affectation of my boyhood. I was assured, arrogant, and bitter, but easy, and not ungraceful. The men trembled at my sarcasms, and the women repeated with wonderment my fantastic raillery. My position in life, and the exaggerated halo with which, in my case as in all others, the talents of eminent youth were injudiciously invested, made me courted by all, especially by the daughters of Eve. I was sometimes nearly the victim of hackneyed experience; sometimes I trifled with affections, which my parental instructions taught me never to respect. On the whole, I considered myself as one of the important personages of the country, possessing great talents, profound knowledge of men and affairs, and a perfect acquaintance with society. When I look back upon myself at this period, I have difficulty in conceiving a more unamiable character.

CHAPTER XI.

IN the third year of my political life the prime minister suddenly died. Here was a catastrophe! Who was to be his successor? Here was a fruitful theme for speculation and intrigue! Public opinion pointed to my father, who indeed, if qualification for the post were only considered, had no competitor; but Baron Fleming was looked upon by his brother nobles with a jealous eye, and,

although not unwilling to profit by his labours, they were chary of allowing them too uncontrolled a scope. He was talked of as a new man: he was treated as scarcely national. The state was not to be placed at the disposal of an adventurer. He was not one of themselves. It was a fatal precedent, that the veins of the prime minister should be filled with any other blood but that of their ancient order. Even many of his colleagues did not affect to conceal their hostility to his appointment, and the Count de Moltke, who was supposed to possess every quality that should adorn the character of a first minister, was openly announced as the certain successor to the vacant office. The Count de Moltke was a frivolous old courtier, who had gained his little experience in long service in the household, and even were he appointed, could only anticipate the practicability of carrying on affairs by implicit confidence in his rival. The Count de Moltke was a tool.

Skilful as my father was in controlling and veiling his emotion, the occasion was too powerful even for his firmness. For the first time in his life he sought a confidant, and firm in the affection of a son, he confessed to me, with an agitation which was alone sufficient to express his meaning, how entirely he had staked his felicity on this cast. He could not refrain from bitterly dilating on the state of society, in which secret influence and the prejudices of a bigoted class should for a moment permit one, who had devoted all the resources of a high intellect to the welfare of his country, to be placed in momentary competition, still more in permanent inferiority, with such an ineffable nonentity as the Count de Moltke.

Every feeling in my nature prompted me to energy. I counselled my father to the most active exertions; but although subtle, he was too cautious, and where he was himself concerned, even timorous. I had no compunction and no fear. I would scruple at no means which could ensure our end. The feeling of society was in general in our favour. Even among the highest class, the women were usually on the side of my father. Baroness Engel, who was the evening star that beamed unrivalled in all our assemblies, and who fancied herself a little Duchess de Longueville, delighted in a political intrigue. I affected to make her our confidant. We resolved together that the only mode was to render our rival ridiculous. I wrote an anonymous pamphlet in favour of the appointment of the Count de Moltke. It took in everybody, until in the last page they read my panegyric of his cream cheeses. It was in vain that the Count de Moltke and all his friends protested that his excellency had never made a cream cheese in the whole course of his life. The story was too probable not to be true. He was just the old fool who would make a cream cheese. I secured the channel of our principal journals. Each

morning teemed with a diatribe against back-stairs' influence, the prejudices of a nobility who were behind their age, and indignant histories of the mal-administration of court favourites. The evening, by way of change, brought only an epigram, sometimes a song. The fashion took: all the youth were on our side. One day, in imitation of the *Tre Giuli*, we published a whole volume of epigrams, all on cream cheeses. The Baroness was moreover an inimitable caricaturist. The shops were filled with infinite scenes, in which a ludicrous old fribble, such as we might fancy a French marquis before the Revolution, was ever committing something irresistibly ridiculous. In addition to all this, I hired ballad-singers, who were always chanting in the public walks, and even under the windows of the palace, the achievements of the unrivalled manufacturer of cream cheeses.

In the meantime my father was not idle. He had discovered that the Count de Bragnaes, one of the most influential nobles in the country and the great supporter of De Moltke, was ambitious of becoming secretary for foreign affairs, and that De Moltke had hesitated in pledging himself to this arrangement, as he could not perceive how affairs could be carried on if my father were entirely dismissed. My father opened a secret negotiation with De Bragnaes, and shook before his eyes the glittering seals he coveted. De Bragnaes was a dolt, but my father required only tools, and felt himself capable of fulfilling the duties of the whole ministry. This great secret was not concealed from me. I opposed the arrangement, not only because De Bragnaes was absolutely inefficient, but because I wished to introduce Baron Engel into the cabinet.

The post of chief minister had now been three weeks vacant, and the delay was accounted for by the illness of the sovereign, who was nevertheless in perfect health. All this excitement took place at the very season we were all assembled in the capital for the purposes of society. My father was everywhere, and each night visible. I contrasted the smiling indifference of his public appearance with the agonies of ambition which it was my doom alone to witness.

I was alone with my father in his cabinet, when a royal messenger summoned him to the presence. The King was at a palace about ten miles from the city. It did not in any way follow from the invitation that my father was successful: all that we felt assured of was that the crisis had arrived. We exchanged looks but not words. Intense as was the suspense, business prevented me from attending my father, and waiting in the royal ante-chamber to hear the great result. He departed.

I had to receive an important deputation, the discussion of whose wishes employed the whole morning. It was with extreme

difficulty that I could command my attention. Never in my life had I felt so nervous. Each moment a messenger entered; I believed that he was the important one. No carriage rolled into the court-yard that did not to my fancy bear my father. At last the deputation retired, and then came private interviews and urgent correspondence.

It was twilight. The servant had lit one burner of the lamp when the door opened, and my father stood before me. I could scarcely refrain from crying out. I pushed out the astonished waiting-man, and locked the door.

My father looked grave, serious—I thought a little depressed. “All is over,” thought I; and in an instant I began speculating on the future, and had created much, when my father’s voice called me back to the present scene.

“His Majesty, Contarini,” said my father, in a dry, formal manner, as if he were speaking to one who had never witnessed his weakness—“his Majesty has been graciously pleased to appoint me to the supreme office of president of his council; and as a further mark of his entire confidence and full approbation of my past services, he has thought fit to advance me to the dignity of Count.”

Was this frigid form that stood unmoved before me the being whom, but four-and-twenty hours ago, I had watched trembling with his high passions? Was this curt, unimpassioned tone the voice in which he should have notified the crowning glory of his fortunes to one who had so struggled in their behalf? I could scarcely speak. I hardly congratulated him.

“And your late post, sir?” I at length inquired.

“The seals of this office will be held by the Baron de Brag-naes.”

I shrugged my shoulders in silence.

“The King is not less aware than myself that his excellency can bring but a slight portion of intellectual strength to the new cabinet; that he is indeed to be placed in a position to discharge duties of which he is incapable, but his Majesty, as well as myself, has unbounded confidence in the perfect knowledge, the energetic assiduity, and the distinguished talents of the individual who will fulfil the duties of under secretary. He will be the virtual head of this great department. Allow me to be the first to congratulate Count Contarini Fleming on his new dignity and his entrance into the service of his sovereign.”

I rushed forward—I pressed his hand. “My dear father,” I said, “I am overwhelmed. I dreamt not of this. I never thought of myself; I thought only of you.”

He pressed my hand, but did not lose his composure. “We

dine together to-day alone," he said. "I must now see De Bragnaes. At dinner I will tell you all. Nothing will be announced till to-morrow. Your friend Engel is not forgotten."

He quitted the chamber. The moment he disappeared I could no longer refrain from glancing in the mirror. Never had I marked so victorious a visage. An unnatural splendour sparkled in my eye, my lip was impressed with energy, my nostril dilated with triumph. I stood before the tall mirror, and planted my foot, and waved my arm. So much more impressive is reality than imagination! Often in reverie had I been an Alboroni, a Ripperda, a Richelieu; but never had I felt, when moulding the destinies of the wide globe, a tithe of the triumphant exultation which was afforded by the consciousness of the simple fact that I was an under secretary of state.

CHAPTER XII.

I HAD achieved by this time what is called a great reputation. I do not know that there was any one more talked of and more considered in the country than myself. I was my father's only confidant, and secretly his only counsellor. I managed De Bragnaes admirably, and always suggested to him the opinion, which I at the same time requested. He was a mere cipher. As for the Count de Moltke, he was very rich, with an only daughter, and my father had already hinted at what I had even turned in my own mind, a union with the wealthy, although not very pleasing, offspring of the maker of cream cheeses.

At this moment, in the zenith of my popularity and power, the Norbergs returned to the capital. I had never seen him since the mad morning which, with all my boasted callousness, I ever blushed to rememember; for the Count had, immediately after my departure, been appointed to a very important although distant government. Nor had I ever heard of them. I never wished to. I drove their memory from my mind, but Christiana, who had many correspondents, and among them the Baroness, had of course heard much of me.

Our family was the first they called upon, and in spite of the mortifying awkwardness of the meeting, it was impossible to avoid it, and therefore I determined to pay my respects to them immediately. I was careful to call when I knew I could not be admitted, and the first interview finally took place at our own house. Christiana received

me with the greatest kindness, although with increased reserve, which might be accounted for by the time that had elapsed since we last met, and the alteration that had since taken place both in my age and station. In all probability she looked upon my present career as a sufficient guarantee that my head was cleared of the wild fancies of my impetuous boyhood, and rejoicing in this accomplishment, and anticipating our future and agreeable acquaintance, she might fairly congratulate herself on the excellent judgment which had prompted her to pass over in silence my unpardonable indiscretion.

Her manner put me so completely at my ease that, a moment after my salute, I wondered I could have been so foolish as to have brooded over it. The Countess was unaltered, except that she looked perhaps more beautiful. She was a rare creation that Time loved to spare. That sweet, and blooming, and radiant face, and that tall and shapely, and beaming form—not a single bad passion had ever marred their light and grace; all the freshness of an innocent heart had embalmed their perennial loveliness.

The party seemed dull. I, who was usually a great talker, could not speak. I dared not attempt to be alone with Christiana. I watched her only at a distance, and indicated my absorbing mood to others only by my curt and discouraging answers. When all was over I retired to my own rooms exceedingly gloomy and dispirited.

I was in these days but a wild beast, who thought himself a civilised and human being. I was profoundly ignorant of all that is true and excellent. An unnatural system, like some grand violence of nature, had transformed the teeming and beneficent ocean of my mind into a sandy and arid desert. I had not then discovered even a faint adumbration of the philosophy of our existence. Blessed by nature with a heart that is the very shrine of sensibility, my infamous education had succeeded in rendering me the most selfish of my species.

But nature, as the philosophic Winter impressed upon me, is stronger than education; and the presence of this woman, this sudden appearance, amid my corrupt and heartless and artificial life, of so much innocence, and so much love, and so much simplicity—they fell upon my callous heart like the first rains upon a Syrian soil, and the refreshed earth responded to the kindly influence, by an instant recurrence to its nature.

I recoiled with disgust from the thought of my present life; I flew back with rapture to my old aspirations. And the beautiful, for which I had so often and so early sighed, and the love that I felt indispensable to my panting frame, and the deep sympathy for all creation that seemed my being, and all the dazzling and extending

glory that had hovered like a halo round my youthful visions, they returned—they returned in their might and their splendour; and when I remembered what I was, I buried my face in my hands and wept.

I retired to my bed, but I could not sleep. I saw no hope, yet I was not miserable. Christiana could never be mine. I did not wish her to be. I could not contemplate such an incident. I had prided myself on my profligacy, but this night avenged my innate purity. I threw off my factitious passions. It was the innocence of Christiana that exercised over me a spell so potent. Her unsophisticated heart awoke in me a passion for the natural and the pure. She was not made to be the heroine of a hackneyed adventure. To me she was not an individual, but a personification of nature. I gazed upon her only as I would upon a beautiful landscape, with an admiring sympathy which ennobles my feelings, invigorates my intellect, and calls forth the latent poetry of my being.

The thought darted into my mind in a moment. I cannot tell how it came. It seemed inspiration, but I responded to it with an eager and even fierce sympathy. Said I that the thought darted into my mind? Let me recal the weak phrase—let me rather say, that a form rose before me in the depth of the dull night, and that form was myself. That form was myself, yet also another. I beheld a youth, who, like me, had stifled the breathing forms of his creation—who, like me, in the cold wilderness of the world, looked back with a mournful glance at the bright gates of the sweet garden of fancy he had forfeited. I felt the deep and agonising struggle of his genius and his fate, and my prophetic mind bursting through all the thousand fetters that had been forged so cunningly to bind it in its cell, the inspiration of my nature, that beneficent demon who will not desert those who struggle to be wise and good, tore back the curtain of the future; and I beheld, seated upon a glorious throne on a proud acropolis, one to whom a surrounding and enthusiastic people offered a laurel crown. I laboured to catch the fleeting features and the changing countenance of him who sat upon the throne. Was it the strange youth, or was it, indeed, myself?

I jumped out of bed. I endeavoured to be calm. I asked myself soberly whether I had indeed seen a vision, or whether it were but the invisible phantasm of an ecstatic reverie? I looked round me; there was nothing. The moonbeam was stationary on the wall. I opened the window and looked out upon the vast, and cold, and silent street. The bitterness of the night cooled me. The pulsations of my throbbing head subsided. I regained my bed and instantly sank into a sweet sleep.

The aunt of the Countess Fleming had died, and left to my step-dame the old Garden-house, which is not perhaps forgotten. As I had always continued on the best possible terms with the Countess, and, indeed, was in all points quite her standard of perfection, she had, with great courtesy, permitted me to make her recently-acquired mansion my habitation, when important business occasionally made me desire for its transaction a spot less subject to constant interruption than my office and my home.

To the Garden-house I repaired the next morning at a very early hour. I was so eager, that I ordered, as I dismounted, my rapid breakfast; and in a few minutes, this being despatched, I locked myself up in my room, giving orders not to be disturbed, unless for a message from my father.

I took up a pen. I held it in the light. I thought to myself what will be its doom, but I said nothing. I began writing some hours before noon, nor did I ever cease. My thoughts—my passion—the rush of my invention, were too quick for my pen. Page followed page; as a sheet was finished I threw it on the floor; I was amazed at the rapid and prolific production, yet I could not stop to wonder. In half a dozen hours I sank back exhausted, with an aching frame. I rang the bell, ordered some refreshment, and walked about the room. The wine invigorated me and warmed up my sinking fancy, which, however, required little fuel. I set to again, and it was midnight before I retired to my bed.

The next day I again rose early, and with a bottle of wine at my side, for I was determined not to be disturbed, I dashed at it again. I was not less successful. This day I finished my first volume.

The third morning I had less inclination to write. I read over and corrected what I had composed. This warmed up my fancy, and in the afternoon I executed several chapters of my second volume.

Each day, although I had not in the least lost my desire of writing, I wrote slower. It was necessary for me each day to read my work from the beginning, before I felt the existence of the characters sufficiently real to invent their actions. Nevertheless, on the morning of the seventh day, the second and last volume was finished.

My book was a rapid sketch of the development of the poetic character. My hero was a youth whose mind was ever combating with his situation. Gifted with a highly poetic temperament, it was the office of his education to counteract all its ennobling tendencies. I traced the first indication of his predisposition, the

growing consciousness of his powers, his reveries, his loneliness, his doubts, his moody misery, his ignorance of his art, his failures, his despair. I painted his agonising and ineffectual habits to exist like those around him. I poured forth my own passion, when I described the fervour of his love.

All this was serious enough, and the most singular thing is, that, all this time it never struck me that I was delineating my own character. But now comes the curious part. In depicting the scenes of society in which my hero was forced to move, I suddenly dashed, not only into slashing satire, but even into malignant personality. All the bitterness of my heart, occasioned by my wretched existence among their false circles, found its full vent. Never was anything so imprudent. Everybody figured, and all parties and opinions alike suffered. The same hand that immortalised the cream cheeses of poor Count de Moltke now avenged his wrongs.

For the work itself, it was altogether a most crude performance, teeming with innumerable faults. It was entirely deficient in art. The principal character, although forcibly conceived, for it was founded on truth, was not sufficiently developed. Of course the others were much less so. The incidents were unnatural, the serious characters exaggerations, the comic ones caricatures; the wit was too often flippant, the philosophy too often forced; yet the vigour was remarkable, the licence of an uncurbed imagination not without charms, and, on the whole, there breathed a freshness which is rarely found, and which, perhaps, with all my art and knowledge, I may never again afford: and, indeed, when I recal the heat with which this little work was written, I am convinced that, with all its errors, the spark of true creation animated its fiery page.

Such is the history of "Manstein," a work which exercised a strange influence on my destiny.

CHAPTER XIII.

I PERSONALLY entrusted my novel to the same bookseller to whom I had anonymously submitted my tragedy. He required no persuasion to have the honour of introducing it to the world; and, had he hesitated, I would myself have willingly undertaken the charge, for I was resolved to undergo the ordeal. I swore him to the closest secrecy, and, as mystery is part of the craft, I had

confidence that his interest would prompt him to maintain his honour.

All now being finished, I suddenly and naturally re-assumed my obvious and usual character. The pouring forth had relieved my mind, and the strong feelings that had prompted it having subsided, I felt a little of the lassitude which succeeds exertion. That reaction to which ardent and inexperienced minds are subject, now also occurred. I lost my confidence in my effusion. It seemed impossible that anything I had written could succeed, and I felt that nothing but decided success could justify a person in my position to be an author. I half determined to recal the rash deposit, but a mixture of false shame and lingering hope that I yet might be happily mistaken, dissuaded me. I resolved to think no more of it. It was an inconsiderate venture, but secrecy would preserve me from public shame, and, as for my private mortification, I should at least derive from failure a beneficial conviction of my literary incompetency, and increased energy to follow up the path which fortune seemed to destine for my pursuit. Official circumstances occurred also at this moment, which imperatively demanded all my attention, and which, indeed, interested my feelings in no ordinary degree.

The throne of my royal master had been guaranteed to him by those famous treaties which, at the breaking up of that brilliant vision, the French empire, had been vainly considered by the great European powers as insuring the permanent settlement of Europe. A change of dynasty had placed the king in a delicate position; but, by his sage counsels and discreet conduct, the last burst of the revolutionary storm passed over without striking his diadem. One of the most distinguished instances of the ministerial dexterity of my father was the discovery of a latent inclination in certain of our powerful allies to favour the interests of the abdicated dynasty and ultimately to dispute the succession, which, at the moment, distracted by the multiplicity of important and engrossing interests they deemed themselves too hastily to have recognised. In this conjuncture, an appeal to arms on our part was idle, and all to which we could trust in bringing about a satisfactory adjustment of this paramount question was diplomatic ingenuity. For more than three years secret but active negotiations had been on foot to attain our end, and circumstances had now occurred which induced us to believe that, by certain combinations, the result might be realised.

I took a very great interest in these negotiations, and was the only person out of the cabinet to whom they were confided. The situation of the prince royal, himself a very accomplished personage, but whose unjust unpopularity offered no obstacle to the views of his

enemies, extremely commanded my sympathy; the secrecy, importance, and refined difficulty of the transactions called forth all the play of my invention. Although an affair which, according to etiquette, should have found its place in the Foreign-office, my father, on his promotion, did not think it fitting to transfer a business of so delicate a nature to another functionary, and he contrived to correspond upon it with foreign courts in his character of first minister. As his secretary I had been privy to all the details, and I continued therefore to assist him in the subsequent proceedings.

My father and myself materially differed as to the course expedient to be pursued. He flattered himself that everything might be brought about by negotiation, in which he was, indeed, unrivalled; and he often expatiated to me on the evident impossibility of the king having recourse to any other measures. For myself, when I remembered the time that had already passed without in any way advancing our desires, and believed, which I did most firmly, that the conduct of the great Continental Powers in this comparatively unimportant affair was only an indication of their resolution to promote the system on which they had based all the European relations, I myself could not refrain from expressing a wish to adopt a very different and far more earnest conduct.

In this state of affairs I was one day desired by my father to attend him at a secret conference with the ambassadors of the great Powers. My father flattered himself that he might this day obtain his long-desired end; and so interested was the monarch in the progress, as well as the result of our consultations, that he resolved to be present himself, although incognito.

The scene of the conference was the same palace whither my father had been summoned to receive the notification of his appointment as first minister. I can well recal the feelings with which, on the morning of the conference, I repaired to the palace with my father. We were muffled up in our pelisses, for the air was very sharp, but the sun was not without influence, and shone with great brilliancy. There are times when I am influenced by a species of what I may term happy audacity, for it is a mixture of recklessness and self-confidence which has a very felicitous effect upon the animal spirits. At these moments I never calculate consequences, yet everything seems to go right. I feel in good fortune; the ludicrous side of everything occurs to me; I think of nothing but grotesque images; I astonish people by bursting into laughter, apparently without a cause. Whatever is submitted to me I turn into ridicule. I shrug my shoulders, and speak epigrams.

I was in one of those moods on that day. My father could not comprehend me. He was very serious; but, instead of sympathising with his grave hopes and dull fears, I did nothing but ridicule their Excellencies whom we were going to meet, and perform to him an imaginary conference, in which he also figured.

We arrived at the palace. I became a little sobered. My father went to the king. I entered a Gothic hall, where the conference was to take place. It was a fine room, hung with trophies, and principally lighted by a large Gothic window. At the farther end near the fire, and portioned off by an Indian screen, was a round table, covered with green cloth, and surrounded by seats. The Austrian minister arrived. I walked up and down the hall with him for some minutes, ridiculing diplomacy. He was one of those persons who believe you have a direct object in everything you say, and my contradictory opinions upon all subjects were to him a fruitful source of puzzling meditation. He thought that I was one whose words ought to be marked, and I believe that my nonsense has often occasioned him a sleepless night. The other ministers soon assembled, and in a few minutes a small door opened at the top of the hall, and the king and my father appeared. We bowed, and took our seats. I, being the secretary, seated myself at the desk to take notes for the drawing up of the protocols.

We believed that the original idea of considering the great treaties as a guarantee to the individuals only, and not to his successors, originated at Vienna. Indeed, it was the early acquaintance of my father with the Austrian minister that first assisted him in ascertaining this intention. We believed that the Russian Cabinet had heartily entered into this new reading; that Prussia supported it only in deference to the Court of St. Petersburg; and that France was scarcely reconciled to the proposed derangement by the impression that it materially assisted those principles of government, by a recurrence to which the Cabinet of Versailles then began to be convinced they would alone maintain themselves.

Such had been our usual view of the state of opinion with respect to this question. It had been the object of my father to induce the French Court to join with that of St. James' in a strong demonstration in favour of the present system, and to indicate, in the event of that demonstration being fruitless, the possibility of their entering with the king into a tripartite treaty, framed in pursuance of the spirit of the invalidated one. He trusted that to-day this demonstration might be made.

We entered into business. The object of our opponents was to deny that the tendency of certain acts of which we complained was inimical to the present dynasty, but to refrain from proving their

sincerity by assenting to a new guarantee, on the plea that it was unnecessary, since the treaties must express all that was intended. Hours were wasted in multiplied discussions as to the meaning of particular clauses in particular treaties, and as to precedents to justify particular acts. Hours were wasted, for we did not advance. At length my father recurred to the spirit, rather than the letter of the affair; and in urging the necessity, for the peace of Europe and other high causes, that this affair should be settled without delay, he gave an excellent opportunity for the friends he had anticipated to come forward. They spoke, indeed, but in a very vague and unsatisfactory manner. I marked the lip of the Austrian minister curl, as if in derision, and the Russian arranged his papers as if all were now finished.

I knew my father well enough by this time to be convinced that, in spite of his apparently unaltered mien, he was bitterly disappointed and annoyed. The king looked gloomy. There was a perfect silence. It was so awkward that the Austrian minister inquired of me the date of a particular treaty, merely to break the dead pause. I did not immediately answer him.

The whole morning my fancy had been busied with grotesque images. I had never been a moment impressed with the gravity of the proceedings. The presence of the king alone prevented me from constant raillery. When I recollected the exact nature of the business on which we were assembled, and then called to mind the characters who took part in the discussion, I could scarcely refrain from laughter. "Voltaire would soon settle this," I thought, "and send Messieurs the Austrian, and the Russian, and the Prussian, with their moustaches, and hussar jackets, and furs, to their own country. What business have they to interfere with ours?" I was strongly impressed with the tyrannical injustice and wicked folly of the whole transaction. The great diplomatists appeared to me so many wild beasts ready to devour our innocent lamb of a sovereign, parleying only from jealousy who should first attack him.

The Austrian minister repeated his question as to the treaty. "It matters not," I replied; "let us now proceed to business." He looked a little surprised. "Gentlemen," I continued, "you must be quite aware that this is the last conference his majesty can permit us to hold upon a subject, which ought never to have been discussed. The case is very simple, and demands but little consideration. If the guarantee we justly require be not granted, his majesty must have recourse to a popular appeal. We have no fear about the result. We are prepared for it. His majesty will acquire a new, and if possible, a stronger title to his crown; and see what you will occasion by your squeamishness to authenticate the right of a sovereign, who, although not the offspring of a dynasty,

acquired his throne not by the voice of the people, and has been constantly recognised by all your courts; you will be the direct cause of a decided democratic demonstration in the election of a king by the people alone. For us, the result has no terrors. Your Excellencies are the best judges, whether your royal masters possess any territories in our vicinity which may be inoculated with our dangerous example."

I was astounded by my audacity. Not till I had ceased speaking had I been aware of what I had dared to do. Once I shot a rapid glance at my father. His eyes were fixed on the ground, and I thought he looked a little pale. As I withdrew my glance, I caught the king's fiery eye, but its expression did not discourage me.

It is difficult to convey an idea of the success of my boldness. It could not enter the imagination of the diplomatists that any one could dare to speak, and particularly under such circumstances, without instructions and without authority. They looked upon me only as the mouthpiece of the royal intentions. They were alarmed at our great, and unwonted, and unexpected resolution; at the extreme danger and invisible results of our purposes. The English and French ministers, who watched every turn, made a vehement representation in our favour, and the conference broke up with an expression of irresolution and surprise in the countenances of our antagonists, quite unusual with them, and which promised the speedy attainment of the satisfactory arrangement which shortly afterwards took place.

The conference broke up, my father retired with the king, and desired me to wait for him in the hall. I was alone. I was excited. I felt the triumph of success. I felt that I had done a great action. I felt all my energies. I walked up and down the hall in a frenzy of ambition, and I thirsted for action. There seemed to me no achievement of which I was not capable, and of which I was not ambitious. In imagination I shook thrones and founded empires. I felt myself a being born to breathe in an atmosphere of revolution.

My father came not. Time wore away, and the day died. It was one of those stern, sublime sunsets, which is almost the only appearance in the north in which nature enchanted me. I stood at the window, gazing on the burnished masses that for a moment were suspended in their fleeting and capricious beauty on the far horizon. I turned aside and looked at the rich trees suffused with the crimson light, and ever and anon irradiated by the dying shoots of a golden ray. The deer were stealing home to their bowers, and I watched them till their glancing forms gradually lost their lustre in the declining twilight. The glory had now departed, and

all grew dim. A solitary star alone was shining in the grey sky—a bright and solitary star.

And as I gazed upon the sunset, and the star, and the dim beauties of the coming eve, my mind grew calm, and all the bravery of my late reverie passed away. And I felt indeed a disgust for all the worldliness on which I had been late pondering. And there arose in my mind a desire to create things beautiful as that golden sun and that glittering star.

I heard my name. The hall was now darkened. In the distance stood my father. I joined him. He placed his arm affectionately in mine, and said to me, "My son, you will be Prime Minister of . . . ; perhaps something greater."

CHAPTER XIV.

As we drove home, everything seemed changed since the morning. My father was in high spirits—for him, even elated: I, on the contrary, was silent and thoughtful. This evening there was a ball at the palace, which, although little inclined, I felt obliged to attend.

I arrived late: the king was surrounded by a brilliant circle, and conversing with his usual felicitous affability. I would have withdrawn when I had made my obeisance, but his majesty advanced a step and immediately addressed me. He conversed with me for some time. Few men possess a more captivating address than this sovereign. It was difficult at all times not to feel charmed, and now I was conscious that this mark of his favour recognised no ordinary claims to his confidence. I was the object of admiring envy. That night there were few in those saloons, crowded with the flower of the land, who did not covet my position. I alone was insensible to it. A vision of high mountains and deep blue lakes mingled with all the artificial splendour that dazzled around. I longed to roam amid the solitude of nature, and disburden a mind teeming with creative sympathy.

I drew near a group which the pretty Baroness Engel was addressing with more than her usual animation. When she caught my eye, she beckoned me to join her, and said, "Oh! Count Constarini, have you read 'Manstein?'"

"Manstein," I said in a careless tone. "What is it?"

"Oh! you must get it directly. The oddest book that ever was written. We are all in it, we are all in it."

"I hope not."

"Oh, yes! all of us. I have not had time to make out the characters, I read it so quickly. My man only sent it to me this morning. I must get a key. Now, you who are so clever, make me one."

"I will look at it, if you really recommend me."

"You must look at it. It is the oddest book that was ever written. Immensely clever, I assure you, immensely clever. I cannot exactly make it out."

"This is certainly much in its favour. The obscure, as you know, is a principal ingredient of the sublime."

"How odd you are! but really now, Count Contarini, get 'Manstein.' Every one must read it. As for your illustrious principal, Baron de Braghaes—he is really hit off to the life."

"Indeed!" I said, with concealed consternation.

"Oh! no one can mistake it. I thought I should have died with laughing. But we are all there. I am sure I know the author."

"Who is it? who is it?" eagerly inquired the group.

"I do not *know*, mind," observed the Baroness. "It is a conjecture, merely a conjecture. But I always find out everybody."

"Oh! that you do," said the group.

"Yes, I find them out by the style."

"How clever you are!" exclaimed the group; "but who is it?"

"Oh, I shall not betray him! Only I am quite convinced I know who it is."

"Pray, pray tell us," entreated the group.

"You need not look around, Matilda, he is not here. A friend of yours, Contarini. I thought that young Moskovsky was in a great hurry to run off to St. Petersburg. And he has left us a legacy. We are all in it, I assure you," she exclaimed to the one nearest, in an under but decisive tone.

I breathed again. "Young Moskovsky! To be sure it is," I observed with an air of thoughtful conviction.

"To be sure it is. Without reading a line, I have no doubt of it. I suspected that he meditated something. I must get 'Manstein' directly, if it be by young Moskovsky. Anything that young Moskovsky writes must be worth reading. What an excellent letter he writes! You are my oracle, Baroness Engel; I have no doubt of your discrimination; but I suspect that a certain correspondence with a brilliant young Muscovite has assisted you in your discovery."

"Be contented," rejoined the Baroness, with a smile of affected mystery and pique, "that there is one who can enlighten you, and be not curious as to the source. Ah, there is Countess Norberg! how well she looks to-night!"

I walked away to salute Christiana. As I moved through the elegant crowd, my nervous ear constantly caught half phrases, which often made me linger. "Very satirical—very odd—very personal—very odd, indeed—what can it all be about? Do you know? No, I do not.—Do you? Baroness Engel—all in it—must get it—very witty—very flippant. Who can it be?—Young Moskoffsky. Read it at once without stopping—never read anything so odd—ran off to St. Petersburg—always thought him very clever. Who can the Duke of Twaddle mean? Ah! to be sure—I wonder it did not occur to me."

I joined Christiana. I waltzed with her. I was on the point, once or twice, of asking her if she had read 'Manstein,' but did not dare. After the dance we walked away. Mademoiselle de Moltke, who, although young, was not charming, but very intellectual, and who affected to think me a great genius because I had pasquinaded her father, stopped me.

"My dear Countess, how do you do? You look most delightfully to-night. Count Contarini, have you read 'Manstein?' You never read anything! How can you say so! but you always say such things. You must read 'Manstein.' Everybody is reading it. It is full of imagination, and very personal—very personal indeed. Baroness Engel says we are all in it. You are there. You are Horace de Beaufort, who thinks everything, and everybody a bore—exactly like you, Count—what I have always said of you. Adieu! Mind you get 'Manstein,' and then come and talk it over with me. Now do, that's a good creature!"—And this talkative Titania tripped away.

"You are wearied, Christiana, and these rooms are insufferably hot. You had better sit down."

We seated ourselves in a retired part of the room. I observed an unusual smile upon the face of Christiana. Suddenly she said, with a slight flush, and not without emotion, "I shall not betray you, Contarini, but I am convinced that you are the author of 'Manstein.'"

I was agitated; I could not immediately speak. I was ever different to Christiana to what I was to other people. I could not feign to her. I could not dissemble. My heart always opened to her; and it seemed to me almost blasphemy to address her in any other language than truth.

"You know me better than all others, Christiana. Indeed, you alone know me. But I would sooner hear that any one was considered the author of 'Manstein' than myself."

"You need not fear that I shall be indiscreet; but rest assured it cannot long be a secret."

"Indeed!" I said. "Why not?"

"Oh! Contarini, it is too like."

"Like whom?"

"Nay! you affect ignorance."

"Upon my honour, Christiana, I do not. Have the kindness to believe that there is at least one person in the world to whom I am not affected. If you mean that 'Manstein' is a picture of myself, I can assure you solemnly that I never less thought of myself than when I drew it. I thought it was an ideal character."

"It is that very circumstance that occasions the resemblance; for you, Contarini, whatever you may appear in this room, you are an ideal character."

"You have read it?" I asked.

"I have read it," she answered, seriously.

"And you do not admire it? I feel you do not. Nay! conceal nothing from me, Christiana, I can bear truth."

"I admire its genius, Contarini. I wish that I could speak with equal approbation of its judgment. It will, I fear, make you many enemies."

"You astonish me, Christiana. I do not care for enemies. I care for nobody, but for you. But why should it make me enemies?"

"I hope I am mistaken. It is very possible I am mistaken. I know not why I talk upon such subjects. It is foolish—it is impertinent; but the deep interest I have always taken in you, Contarini, occasions this conversation, and must excuse it."

"Dear Christiana, how good, how very good you are!"

"And all these people whom you have ridiculed—surely, Contarini, you have enough already who envy you—surely, Contarini, it was most imprudent."

"People ridiculed! I never meant to ridicule any person in particular. I wrote with rapidity. I wrote of what I had seen and what I felt. There is nothing but truth in it."

"You are not in a position, Contarini, to speak truth."

"Then I must be in a very miserable position, Christiana."

"You are what you are, Contarini. All must admire you. You are in a very envied, I will hope a very enviable, position."

"Alas! Christiana, I am the most miserable fellow that breathes upon this broad earth."

She was silent.

"Dearest Christiana," I continued, "I speak to you as I would speak to no other person. Think not that I am one of those who deem it interesting to be considered unhappy. Such trifling I despise. What I say to you, I would not confess to another human being. Among these people my vanity would be injured to be considered miserable. But I am unhappy, really unhappy—most

desolately wretched. Envidable position! But an hour since I was meditating how I could extricate myself from it! Alas! Christiana, I cannot ask you for counsel, for I know not what I desire—what I could wish; but I feel—each hour I feel more keenly, and even more keenly than when I am with you—that I was not made for this life, nor this life for me.”

“I cannot advise you, Contarini. What can I advise? But I am unhappy to find that you are. I grieve deeply that one, apparently with all that can make him happy, should still miss felicity. You are yet very young, Contarini, and I cannot but believe that you will still attain all you desire, and all that you deserve.”

“I desire nothing. I know not what I want. All I know is that what I possess I abhor.”

“Ah! Contarini, beware of your imagination.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE storm, that had been apprehended by the prescient affection of Christiana, surely burst. I do not conceive that my publisher betrayed me. I believe that internal evidence settled the affair. In a fortnight it was acknowledged by all that I was the author of “Manstein,” and all were surprised that this authorship could, for a moment, have been a question. I can give no idea of the outcry. Everybody was in a passion, or affected to be painfully sensitive of their neighbours’ wrongs. The very personality was ludicrously exaggerated. Everybody took a delight in detecting the originals of my portraits. Various keys were handed about, all different; and not content with recognising the very few decided sketches from life which there really were, and which were sufficiently obvious and not very malignant, they mischievously insisted that not a human shadow glided over my pages which might not be traced to its substance, and protested that the Austrian minister was the model of an old woman.

Those who were ridiculed insisted that the ridicule called in question the very first principles of society. They talked of confidence violated, which never had been shared; and faith broken which never had been pledged. Never was so much nonsense talked about nothing since the days of the schoolmen. But nonsense, when earnest, is impressive, and sometimes takes you in. If you are in a hurry, you occasionally mistake it for sense. All the

people who had read "Manstein," and been very much amused with it, began to think they were quite wrong, and that it was a very improper and wicked book, because this was daily reiterated in their ears by half-a-dozen bores, who had gained an immortality which they did not deserve. Such conduct, it was universally agreed, must not be encouraged. Where would it end? Everybody was alarmed. Men passed me in the street without notice; I received anonymous letters, and even many of my intimates grew cold. As I abhor explanations, I said nothing; and, although I was disgusted with the folly of much that I had heard, I contradicted nothing, however ridiculously false, and felt confident that, in time, the world would discover that they had been gulled into fighting the battle of a few individuals whom they despised. I found even a savage delight in being an object, for a moment, of public astonishment, and fear, and indignation. But the affair getting at last troublesome, I fought young De Bragnaes with swords in the Deer Park, and, having succeeded in pinking him, it was discovered that I was more amiable. For the rest, out of my immediate circle, the work had been from the first decidedly successful.

In all this not very agreeable affair, I was delighted by the conduct of Christiana. Although she seriously disapproved of what was really objectionable in "Manstein," and although she was of so modest and quiet a temper that she unwillingly exercised that influence in society to which her rank and fortune and rare accomplishments entitled her, she suddenly became my most active and even violent partisan, ridiculed the pretended wrongs and mock propriety that echoed around her, and, declaring that the author of "Manstein" had only been bold enough to print that which all repeated, rallied them on their hypocrisy. Baroness Engel also was faithful, although a little jealous of the zeal of Christiana; and, between them, they laughed down the cabal, and so entirely turned the public feeling that, in less than a month, it was universally agreed that "Manstein" was a most delightful book, and the satire, as they daintily phrased it, "perfectly allowable."

Amid all this tumult my father was silent. From no look, from no expression of his, could I gain a hint either of his approval or his disapprobation. I could not ascertain even if he had seen the book. The Countess Fleming of course read it immediately, and had not the slightest conception of what it was about. When she heard it was by me, she read it again, and was still more puzzled, but told me she was delighted. When the uproar took place, instead of repeating, which she often did, all the opinions she had caught, she became quite silent, and the volumes disappeared from her table. The storm blew over, and no bolt had shivered me, and the volumes crept forth from their mysterious retirement.

About two months after the publication of "Manstein" appeared a new number of the great critical journal of the north of Europe. One of the works reviewed was my notorious production. I tore open the leaves with a blended feeling of desire and fear, which I can yet remember. I felt prepared for the worst. I felt that such grave censors, however impossible it was to deny the decided genius of the work, and however eager they might be to hail the advent of an original mind,—I felt that it was but reasonable and just that they should disapprove of the temper of the less elevated portions, and somewhat dispute the moral tendency of the more exalted.

With what horror, with what blank despair, with what supreme, appalling astonishment, did I find myself, for the first time in my life, a subject of the most reckless, the most malignant, and the most adroit ridicule. I was scarified, I was scalped. They scarcely condescended to notice my dreadful satire; except to remark, in passing, that, by the bye, I appeared to be as ill-tempered as I was imbecile. But all my eloquence, and all my fancy, and all the strong expression of my secret feelings—these ushers of the court of Apollo fairly laughed me off Parnassus, and held me up to public scorn, as exhibiting the most lamentable instance of mingled pretension and weakness, and the most ludicrous specimen of literary delusion that it had ever been their unhappy office to castigate, and, as they hoped, to cure.

The criticism fell from my hand. A film floated over my vision; my knees trembled. I felt that sickness of heart, that we experience in our first serious scrape. I was ridiculous. It was time to die.

What did it signify? What was authorship to me? What did I care for their flimsy fame—I, who, not yet of age, was an important functionary of the state, and who might look to its highest confidence and honours. It was really too ludicrous. I tried to laugh. I did smile very bitterly. The insolence of these fellows! Why! if I could not write, surely I was not a fool. I had done something. Nobody thought me a fool. On the contrary, everybody thought me a rather extraordinary person. What would they think now? I felt a qualm.

I buried my face in my hands; I summoned my thoughts to their last struggle; I penetrated into my very soul; and I felt the conviction, that literary creation was necessary to my existence, and that for it I was formed. And all the beautiful and dazzling forms that had figured in my youthful visions rose up before me—crowned monarchs, and radiant heroes, and women brighter than day; but their looks were mournful, and they extended their arms with deprecating anguish, as if to entreat me not to desert them.

And, in the magnificence of my emotions, and the beauty of my visions, the worldly sarcasms that had lately so shaken me seemed something of another and a lower existence; and I marvelled that for a moment this thin transient cloud could have shadowed the sunshine of my soul. And I arose, and lifted up my arm to heaven, and waved it like a banner, and I swore by the Nature that I adored, that, in spite of all opposition, I would be an author—ay! the greatest of authors; and that far climes and distant ages should respond to the magic of my sympathetic page.

The agony was past. I mused in calmness over the plans that I should pursue. I determined to ride down to my father's castle, and there mature them in solitude. Haunt of my early boyhood, fragrant bower of Egeria, sweet spot where I first scented the bud of my spring-like fancy, willingly would I linger in thy green retreats, no more to be wandered over by one who now feels that he was ungrateful to thy beauty!

Now that I had resolved at all costs to quit my country, and to rescue myself from the fatal society in which I was placed, my impartial intelligence, no longer swayed by the conscious impossibility of emancipation, keenly examined and ascertained the precise nature and condition of my character. I perceived myself a being educated in systematic prejudice. I observed that I was the slave of custom, and never viewed any incident in relation to man in general, but only with reference to the particular and limited class of society of which I was a member. I recognised myself as selfish and affected. I was entirely ignorant of the principles of genuine morality, and I deeply felt that there was a total want of nature in everything connected with me. I had been educated without any regard to my particular or to my general nature; I had nothing to assist me in my knowledge of myself, and nothing to guide me in my conduct to others. The consequence of my unphilosophical education was my utter wretchedness.

I determined to re-educate myself. Conceiving myself a poet, I resolved to pursue a course which should develop and perfect my poetic power; and, never forgetting that I was a man, I was equally earnest, in a study of human nature, to discover a code of laws which should regulate my intercourse with my fellow-creatures. For both these sublime purposes it was necessary that I should form a comprehensive acquaintance with nature in all its varieties and conditions; and I resolved therefore to travel. I intended to detail all these feelings to my father, to conceal nothing from him, and request his approbation and assistance. In the event of his opposition, I should depart without his sanction, for to depart I was resolved.

I remained a week at the castle musing over these projects,

and entirely neglecting my duties, in the fulfilment of which, ever since the publication of "Manstein," I had been very remiss. Suddenly I received a summons from my father to repair to him without a moment's delay.

I hurried up to town, and hastened to his office. He was not there, but expecting me at home. I found him busied with his private secretary, and apparently very much engaged. He dismissed his secretary immediately, and then said, "Contarini, they are rather troublesome in Norway. I leave town instantly for Bergen with the king. I regret it, because we shall not see each other for some little time. His majesty has had the goodness, Contarini, to appoint you Secretary of Legation at the Court of London. Your appointment takes place at once, but I have obtained you leave of absence for a year. You will spend this attached to the Legation at Paris. I wish you to be well acquainted with the French people before you join their neighbours. In France and England you will see two great practical nations. It will do you good. I am sorry that I am so deeply engaged now. My *chasseur*, Lausanne, will travel with you. He is the best travelling servant in the world. He served me when I was your age. He is one of the few people in whom I have unlimited confidence. He is not only clever, but he is judicious. You will write to me as often as you can. Strelamb," and here he rang the bell, "Strelamb has prepared all necessary letters and bills for you." Here the functionary entered. "Mr. Strelamb," said my father, "while you explain those papers to Count Contarini I will write to the Duke of Montfort."

I did not listen to the private secretary, I was so astonished. My father, in two minutes, had finished his letter. "This may be useful to you, Contarini. It is to an old friend, and a powerful man. I would not lose time about your departure, Contarini. Mr. Strelamb, is there no answer from Baron Engel?"

"My lord, the carriage waits," announced a servant.

"I must go. Adieu! Contarini. Write when you arrive at Paris. Mr. Strelamb, see Baron Engel to-night, and send me off a courier with his answer. Adieu! Contarini."

He extended me his hand. I touched it very slightly. I never spoke. I was thunderstruck.

Suddenly I started up and rang the bell. "Send me Lausanne!" I told the servant.

Lausanne appeared. Had my astonishment not been excited by a greater cause, I might have felt considerable surprise at my father delegating to me his confidential domestic. Lausanne was a Swiss, about my father's age, with a frame of iron, and all the virtues of his mountains. He was, I believe, the only

person in whom my father placed implicit trust. But I thought not of this then. "Lausanne, I understand you are now in my service."

He bowed.

"I have no doubt I shall find cause to confirm the confidence which you have enjoyed in our house for more than twenty years. Is everything ready for my departure?"

"I had no idea that your Excellency had any immediate intention to depart."

"I should like to be off to-night, good Lausanne. Ay! this very hour. When can I go?"

"Your Excellency's wardrobe must be prepared. Your Excellency has not given Carl any directions."

"None. I do not mean to take him. I shall travel with you only."

"Your Excellency's wardrobe——"

"May be sufficiently prepared in an hour, and Paris must supply the rest. In a word, Lausanne, can I leave this place by daybreak to-morrow? Think only of what is necessary. Show some of your old energy."

"Your Excellency may rest assured," said Lausanne, after some reflection, "that everything will be prepared by that time."

"It is well. Is the Countess at home?"

"The Countess quitted town yesterday on a visit to the Countess de Norberg."

"The Countess de Norberg! I should have seen her too. Go, Lausanne, and be punctual. Carl will give you the keys. The Countess de Norberg, Christiana! Yes! I should have seen *her*. Ah! it is as well. I have no friends, and my adieus are brief; let them not be bitter. Farewell to the father that has no feeling! And thou too, Scandinavia, stern soil in which I have too long lingered—think of me hereafter as of some exotic bird, who for a moment lost its way in thy cold heaven, but now has regained its course, and wings its flight to a more brilliant earth and a brighter sky!"

PART THE THIRD.



CHAPTER I.

ON the eighteenth day of August, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-six, I praise the Almighty Giver of all goodness, that, standing upon the height of Mount Jura, I beheld the whole range of the High Alps, with Mont Blanc in the centre, without a cloud: a mighty spectacle rarely beheld; for, on otherwise cloudless days, these sublime elevations are usually veiled.

I accepted this majestic vision as a good omen. It seemed that nature received me in her fullest charms. I was for some time so entranced that I did not observe the spreading and shining scene which opened far beneath me. The mountains, in ranges gradually diminishing, terminated in isolated masses, whose enormous forms, in deep shade, beautifully contrasted with the glittering glaciers of the higher peaks, and rose out of a plain covered with fair towns and bright chateaux, embossed in woods of chestnut, and vines festooning in orchards and cornfields. Through the centre of the plain, a deep blue lake wound its way, which, viewed from the height of Jura, seemed like a purple girdle carelessly thrown upon some imperial robe.

I had remained in Paris only a few days, and, without offering any explanation to our minister, or even signifying my intention to Lausanne, had quitted that city with the determination of reaching Venice without delay. Now that it is probable I may never again cross the mountains, I often regret that I neglected this opportunity of becoming more acquainted with the French people. My head was then full of fantasies, and I looked upon the French as an anti-poetical nation; but I have since often regretted that I omitted this occasion of becoming acquainted with a race who exercise so powerful an influence over civilisation.

I had thought of Switzerland only as of a rude barrier between me and the far object of my desires. The impression that this extraordinary country made upon me was perhaps increased by my previous thoughts having so little brooded over the idea of it. It was in Switzerland that I first felt how the constant contemplation

of sublime creation develops the poetic power. It was here that I first began to study nature. Those forests of black gigantic pines, rising out of the deep snows; those tall white cataracts, leaping like headstrong youth into the world, and dashing from their precipices, as if allured by the beautiful delusion of their own rainbow mist; those mighty clouds, sailing beneath my feet, or clinging to the bosoms of the dark green mountains, or boiling up like a spell from the invisible and unfathomable depths; the fell avalanche, fleet as a spirit of evil—terrific when its sound suddenly breaks upon the almighty silence—scarcely less terrible when we gaze upon its crumbling and pallid frame, varied only by the presence of one or two blasted firs; the head of a mountain loosening from its brother peak, rooting up, in the roar of its rapid rush, a whole forest of pines, and covering the earth for miles with elephantine masses; the supernatural extent of landscape that opens to us new worlds; the strong eagles, and the strange wild birds that suddenly cross you in your path, and stare, and shrieking fly; and all the soft sights of joy and loveliness that mingle with these sublime and savage spectacles—the rich pastures, and the numerous flocks, and the golden bees, and the wild flowers, and the carved and painted cottages, and the simple manners and the primeval grace—wherever I moved I was in turn appalled or enchanted; but, whatever I beheld, new images ever sprang up in my mind, and new feelings ever crowded on my fancy.

There is something magical in the mountain air. There my heart is light, my spirits cheerful, everything is exhilarating; there I am in every respect a different being from what I am in lowlands. I cannot even think; I dissolve into a delicious reverie, in which everything occurs to me without effort. Whatever passes before me gives birth in my mind to a new character—a new image, a new train of fancies. I sing, I shout, I compose aloud, but without premeditation—without any attempt to guide my imagination by my reason. How often, after journeying along the wild mule-track—how often, on a sunny day, have I suddenly thrown myself upon the turf, revelled in my existence, and then as hastily jumped up and raised the wild birds with a wilder scream. I think that these involuntary bursts must have been occasioned by the unconscious influence of extreme health. As for myself, when I succeed in faintly recalling the rapture which I have experienced in these solitary rambles, and muse over the flood of fancy which then seemed to pour itself over my whole being, and gush out of every feeling and every object, I contrast, with mortification, those warm and pregnant hours with this cold record of my maturer age.

I remember that, when I first attempted to write, I had a great desire to indulge in simile, and that I never could succeed in

gratifying my wish. This inability, more than any other circumstance, convinced me that I was not a poet. Even in "Manstein," which was written in a storm, and without any reflection, there are, I believe, few images, and those, probably, are all copied from books. That which surprised and gratified me most, when roving about Switzerland, was the sudden development of the faculty of illustrating my thoughts and feelings which took place. Every object that crossed me in some way associated itself with my moral emotions. Not a mountain, or lake, or river—not a tree, or flower, or bird—that did not blend with some thought, or fancy, or passion, and become the lively personification of conceptions that lie sleeping in abstraction.

It is singular that, with all this, I never felt any desire to write, I never thought of writing. I never thought of the future, or of man, or fame. I was content to exist. I began from this moment to suspect, what I have since learnt firmly to believe, that the sense of existence is the greatest happiness; and that, deprived of every worldly advantage which is supposed so necessary to our felicity—life—provided a man be not immured in a dungeon, must nevertheless be inexpressibly delightful. If, in striking the balance of sensation, misery were found to predominate, no human being would endure the curse of existence; but, however vast may be the wretchedness occasioned to us by the accidents of life, the certain sum of happiness, which is always supplied by our admirably-contrived being, ever supports us under the burden. Those who are sufficiently interested with my biography to proceed with it, will find, as they advance, that this is a subject on which I am qualified to offer an opinion.

I returned from these glowing rambles to my head-quarters, which was usually Geneva. I returned like the bees, laden with treasure. I mused over all the beautiful images that had occurred to me, and all the new characters that had risen in my mind, and all the observations of Nature which hereafter would perhaps permit me to delineate what was beautiful. For, the moment that I mingled again with men, I wished to influence them. But I had no immediate or definite intention of appealing to their sympathies. Each hour I was more conscious of the long apprenticeship that was necessary in the cunning craft for which, as I conceived, I possessed a predisposition. I thought of "Manstein" as of a picture painted by a madman in the dark; and, when I remembered that crude performance, and gazed upon the beauty, and the harmony, and the fitting parts of the great creations around me, my cheek has often burned, even in solitude.

In these moments—rather of humility than despondence, I would fly for consolation to the blue waters of that beautiful lake,

whose shores have ever been the favourite haunt of genius—the fair and gentle Leman.

Nor is there indeed in nature a sight more lovely than to watch, at decline of day, the last embrace of the sun lingering on the rosy glaciers of the White Mountain. Soon, too soon, the great luminary dies—the warm peaks subside into purple and then die into a ghostly white; but soon, ah! not too soon, the moon springs up from behind a mountain, flings over the lake a stream of light, and the sharp glaciers glitter like silver.

I have often passed the whole night upon these enchanted waters, contemplating their beautiful variety; and, indeed, if anything can console one for the absence of the moon and stars, it would be to watch the lightning, on a dark night, on this superb lake. It is incessant—and sometimes in four or five different places at the same time. In the morning Leman loses its ultramarine tint, and is covered with the shadows of mountains and chateaux.

In mountain valleys it is beautiful to watch the effect of the rising and setting of the sun. The high peaks are first illumined, the soft yellow light then tips the lower elevations, and the bright golden showers soon bathe the whole valley, excepting a dark streak at the bottom, which is often not visited by sunlight. The effect of sunset is perhaps still more lovely. The highest peaks are those which the sun loves most. One by one the mountains, according to their elevation, steal into darkness, and the rosy tint is often suffused over the peaks and glaciers of Mont Blanc, while the whole world below is enveloped in the darkest twilight.

What is it that makes me long to dwell upon these scenes, which, with all their loveliness, I have never again visited? Is it, indeed, the memory of their extreme beauty, or of the happy hours they afforded me; or is it because I am approaching a period of my life which I sometimes feel I shall never have courage to delineate?

CHAPTER II.

THE thunder roared, the flashing lightning revealed only one universal mist, the wind tore up the pines by their roots, and flung them down into the valley, the rain descended in inundating gusts.

When once I had resolved to quit Geneva, my desire to reach Venice returned upon me in all its original force. I had travelled

to the foot of the Simplon without a moment's delay, and now I had the mortification to be detained there in a wretched mountain village, intersected by a torrent whose roar was deafening, and with large white clouds sailing about the streets.

The storm had lasted three days; no one had ever heard of such a storm at this time of the year; it was quite impossible to pass; it was quite impossible to say when it would end, or what would happen. The poor people only hoped that no evil was impending over the village of Brieg. As for myself, when, day after day, I awoke only to find the thunder more awful, the lightning more vivid, and the mist more gloomy, I began to believe that my two angels were combating on the height of Simplon, and that some supernatural and perhaps beneficent power would willingly prevent me from entering Italy.

I retired to bed, I flung my cloak upon a chair opposite to a blazing wood fire, and I soon fell asleep. I dreamt that I was in the vast hall of a palace, and that it was full of reverend and bearded men in rich dresses. They were seated at a council table, upon which their eyes were fixed, and I, who had recently entered, stood aside. And suddenly their President raised his head, and observed me, and beckoned to me with much dignity. And I advanced to him, and he extended to me his hand, and said, with a gracious smile, "*You have been long expected.*"

The council broke up, the members dispersed, and by his desire I followed the President. And we entered another chamber, which was smaller, but covered with pictures, and on one side of the door was a portrait of Julius Cæsar, and on the other one of myself. And my guide turned his head, and pointing to the paintings, said, "*You see you have been long expected. There is a great resemblance between you and your uncle.*"

And my companion suddenly disappeared, and being alone I walked up to a large window, but I could distinguish nothing, except when the lightning revealed the thick gloom. And the thunder rolled over the palace. And I knelt down and prayed, and suddenly the window was irradiated, and the bright form of a female appeared. Her fair hair reached beneath her waist, her countenance was melancholy, yet seraphic. In her hand she held a crucifix. And I said, "O, blessed Magdalen, have you at last returned? I have been long wandering in the wilderness, and methought you had forgotten me. And indeed I am about again to go forth, but Heaven frowns upon my pilgrimage." And she smiled, and said, "*Sunshine succeeds storm. You have been long expected.*" And, as she spoke, she vanished, and I looked again through the window, and beheld a beautiful city very fair in the sun. Its marble palaces rose on each side of a broad canal, and a

multitude of boats skimmed over the blue water. And I knew where I was. And I descended from the palace to the brink of the canal, and my original guide saluted me, and in his company I entered a gondola.

A clap of thunder broke over the very house and woke me. I jumped up in my bed, and stared. I beheld sitting in my room the same venerable personage, in whose presence I had the moment before found myself. The embers of the fire shot forth a faint and flickering light. I felt that I had been asleep and had dreamed. I even remembered where I was. I was not in any way confused. Yet before me was this mysterious companion, gazing upon me with the same gracious dignity with which he had at first beheld me in the palace. I remained sitting up in my bed, staring with starting eyes and opened mouth. Gradually his image became fainter and fainter. His features melted away, his form also soon dissolved, and I discovered only the empty chair and hanging cloak.

I jumped out of bed. The storm still raged. A bell was tolling. Few things are more awful than a bell tolling in a storm. It was about three hours past midnight. I called Lausanne.

"Lausanne," I said, "I am resolved to cross the mountain by sunrise, come what come may. Offer any rewards, make what promises you please—but I am resolved to cross—even in the teeth of an avalanche." Although I am a person easily managed in little matters, and especially by servants, I spoke in a tone which Lausanne sufficiently knew me to feel to be decisive. He was not one of those men who make or imagine difficulties, but on the contrary, fruitful in discovering expedients, yet he seemed not a little surprised, and slightly hesitated.

"Lausanne," I said, "if you think it too dangerous to venture, I release you from your duty. But cross the mountain I shall, and in two or three hours, even if I cross it alone."

He quitted the room. I threw a fresh log upon the fire, and repeated to myself, "*I have been long expected.*"

CHAPTER III.

BEFORE six o'clock all was prepared. Besides the postillions, Lausanne engaged several guides. I think we must have been about six hours ascending, certainly not more, and this does not much exceed the usual course. I had occasion on this, as I have

since in many other conjunctures, to observe what an admirable animal is man when thrown upon his own resources in danger. The coolness, the courage, the perseverance, the acuteness, and the kindness with which my companions deported themselves, were as remarkable as they were delightful. As for myself, I could do nothing but lean back in the carriage and trust to their experience and energy. It was indeed awful. We were almost always enveloped in mist, and if a violent gust for a moment dissipated the vapour, it was only to afford a glimpse of the precipices on whose very brink we were making our way. Nothing is more terrific than the near roar of a cataract in the dark. It is horrible. As for myself, I will confess that I was more than once fairly frightened, and when the agitated shouts of my companions indicated the imminence of the impending danger, I felt very much like a man who had raised a devil that he cannot lay.

The storm was only on the lower part of the mountain. As we ascended, it became clearer. The scene was absolute desolation. At length we arrived at a small table-land, surrounded by slight elevations, the whole covered with eternal snows. Cataracts were coursing down these hills in all directions, and the plain was covered with the chaotic forms of crumbled avalanches. The sky was a thick dingy white. My men gave a loud shout of exultation and welcomed me to the summit of Simplon.

Here I shook hands and parted with my faithful guides. As I was enveloping myself in my furs, the clouds broke towards Italy, and a beautiful streak of blue sky seemed the harbinger of the Ausonian heaven. I felt in high spirits, and we dashed down the descent with an ease and rapidity that pleasantly reminded me, by the contrast, of our late labour.

A descent down one of the high Alps is a fine thing. It is very exciting to scamper through one of those sublime tunnels, cut through solid rocks six thousand feet above the ocean; to whirl along those splendid galleries over precipices whose terminations are invisible; to gallop through passes, as if you were flying from the companions of the avalanches which are dissolving at your feet; to spin over bridges spanning a roaring and rushing torrent, and to dash through narrow gorges backed with eternal snows peeping over the nearer and blacker back-ground.

It was a sudden turn. Never shall I forget it. I called to Lausanne to stop, and, notwithstanding the difficulty, they clogged the wheels with stones. It was a sudden turn of the road. It came upon me like a spirit. The quick change of scenery around me had disturbed my mind, and prevented me from dwelling upon the idea. So it came upon me unexpectedly, most, most unexpectedly. Ah, why did I not then die? I was too happy. I stood

up to gaze for the first time upon Italy, and the tears stole down my cheek.

Yes! yes! I at length gazed upon those beautiful and glittering plains. Yes! yes! I at length beheld those purple mountains, and drank the balmy breath of that fragrant and liquid air. After such longing, after all the dull misery of my melancholy life, was this great boon indeed accorded me! Why, why did I not then die? I was indeed, indeed, too happy!

CHAPTER IV.

I AWOKE. I asked myself, "Am I indeed in Italy?" I could scarcely refrain from shouting with joy. While dressing, I asked many questions of Lausanne, that his answers might assure me of this incredible happiness. When he left the room, I danced about the chamber like a madman.

"Am I indeed in Italy?" My morning's journey was the most satisfactory answer. Although, of late, the business of my life had been only to admire Nature, my progress was nevertheless one uninterrupted gaze.

Those azure mountains, those shining lakes, those gardens, and palaces, and statues, those cupolaed convents crowning luxuriant wooded hills, and flanked by a single but most graceful tree, the undulation of shore, the projecting headland, the receding bay, the roadside uninclosed, yet bounded with walnut, and vine, and fig, and acacia, and almond trees, bending down under their bursting fruit, the wonderful effect of light and shade, the trunks of all the trees, looking black as ebony, and their thick foliage, from the excessive light, quite thin and transparent in the sunshine, the white sparkling villages, each with a church with a tall slender tower, and large melons trailing over the marble wall,—and, above all, the extended prospect, so striking after the gloom of Alpine passes, and so different in its sunny light, from the reflected, unearthly glare of eternal snows,—yes, yes, this indeed was Italy! I could not doubt my felicity, even if I had not marked, with curious admiration, the black eyes and picturesque forms that were flashing and glancing about me in all directions.

Milan, with its poetic opera, and Verona, gay amid the mingling relics of two thousand years, and Vicenza, with its Palladian palaces and gates of triumph, and pensive Padua, with its studious colonnades—I tore myself from their attractions. Their choicest

memorials only accelerated my progress, only made me more anxious to gain the chief seat of the wonderful and romantic people who had planted in all their market-places the winged lion of St. Mark, and raised their wild and Saracenic piles between Roman amphitheatres and feudal castles.

I was upon the Brenta, upon that river over which I had so often mused beneath the rigour of a Scandinavian heaven: the Brenta was before me, with all those villas, which, in their number, their variety, and their splendour, form the only modern creation that can be ranked with the Baïæ of imperial Rome. I had quitted Padua at a very early hour to reach Venice before sunset. Half way, the horses jibbed on the sandy road, and a spring of the carriage was broken. To pass the time, while this accident was repairing, Lausanne suggested to me to visit a villa at hand, which was celebrated for the beauty of its architecture and gardens. It was inhabited only by an old domestic, who attended me over the building. The vast suite of chambers, and their splendid although ancient decorations, were the first evidence that I had yet encountered of that domestic magnificence of the Venetians of which I had heard so much. I walked forth into the gardens alone, to rid myself of the garrulous domestic. I proceeded along a majestic terrace, covered with orange trees, at the end of which was a beautiful chapel. The door was unlocked, and I entered. An immense crucifix of ebony was placed upon the altar, and partly concealed a picture placed over the Holy Table. Yet the picture could not escape me. Oh! no; it could not escape me, for it was the original of that famous Magdalen which had, so many years before, and in so different a place, produced so great a revolution in my feelings. I remained before it some time; and as I gazed upon it, the history of my life was again acted before me. I quitted the chapel, revolving in my mind this strange coincidence, and crossing the lawn, I came to a temple which a fanciful possessor had dedicated to his friends. Over the portal was an inscription. I raised my sight, and read, "*Enter; you have been long expected!*"

I started, and looked around, but all was silent. I turned pale, and hesitated to go in. I examined the inscription again. My courage rallied, and I found myself in a small, but elegant banqueting house, furnished, but apparently long disused. I threw myself into a seat at the head of the table, and, full of a rising superstition, I almost expected that some of the venerable personages of my dream would enter to share my feast. They came not; half an hour passed away; I rose, and, without premeditation, I wrote upon the wall, "*If I have been long expected, I have at length arrived. Be you also obedient to the call.*"

CHAPTER V.

AN hour before sunset I arrived at Fusina, and beheld, four or five miles out at sea, the towers and cupolas of Venice suffused with a rich golden light, and rising out of the bright blue waters. Not an exclamation escaped me. I felt like a man who has achieved a great object. I was full of calm exultation, but the strange incident of the morning made me serious and pensive.

As our gondolas glided over the great Lagune, the excitement of the spectacle reanimated me. The buildings that I had so fondly studied in books and pictures rose up before me. I knew them all; I required no Cicerone. One by one I caught the hooded cupolas of St. Mark, the tall Campanile red in the sun, the Moresco Palace of the Doges, the deadly Bridge of Sighs, and the dark structure to which it leads. Here my gondola quitted the Lagune, and, turning up a small canal, and passing under a bridge which connected the quays, stopped at the steps of a palace.

I ascended a staircase of marble, I passed through a gallery crowded with statues, I was ushered into spacious apartments, the floors of which were marble, and the hangings satin. The ceilings were painted by Tintoretto and his scholars, and were full of Turkish trophies and triumphs over the Ottomite. The furniture was of the same rich material as the hangings, and the gilding, although of two hundred years' duration, as bright and burnished as the costly equipment of a modern palace. From my balcony of blinds, I looked upon the great Lagune. It was one of those glorious sunsets which render Venice, in spite of her degradation, still famous. The sky and sea vied in the brilliant multiplicity of their blended tints. The tall shadows of her Palladian churches flung themselves over the glowing and transparent wave out of which they sprang. The quays were crowded with joyous groups, and the black gondolas flitted, like sea-serpents, over the red and rippling waters.

I hastened to the Place of St. Mark. It was crowded and illuminated. Three gorgeous flags waved on the mighty staffs, which are opposite to the church in all the old drawings, and which once bore the standards of Candia, and Cyprus, and the Morea. The coffee-houses were full, and gay parties, seated on chairs in the open air, listened to the music of military bands, while they refreshed themselves with confectionery so rich and fanciful that it excites the admiration of all travellers, but which I since discovered in Turkey to be oriental. The variety of

costume was also great. The dress of the lower orders in Venice is still unchanged: many of the middle classes yet wear the cap and cloak. The Hungarian and the German military, and the bearded Jew, with his black velvet cap and flowing robes, are observed with curiosity. A few days also before my arrival, the Austrian squadron had carried into Venice a Turkish ship and two Greek vessels, which had violated the neutrality. Their crews now mingled with the crowd. I beheld, for the first time, the haughty and turbaned Ottoman, sitting cross-legged on his carpet under a colonnade, sipping his coffee and smoking a long chibouque, and the Greeks, with their small red caps, their high foreheads, and arched eyebrows.

Can this be modern Venice, I thought? Can this be the silent, and gloomy, and decaying city, over whose dishonourable misery I have so often wept? Could it ever have been more enchanting? Are not these indeed still subjects of a Doge, and still the bridegrooms of the ocean? Alas, the brilliant scene was as unusual as unexpected, and was accounted for by its being the feast day of a favourite Saint. Nevertheless, I rejoiced at the unaccustomed appearance of the city at my entrance, and still I recal with pleasure the delusive moments, when, strolling about the Place of St. Mark, the first evening that I was in Venice, I mingled for a moment in a scene that reminded me of her lost light-heartedness, and of that unrivalled gaiety which so long captivated polished Europe.

The moon was now in her pride. I wandered once more to the quay, and heard for the first time a serenade. A juggler was conjuring in a circle under the walls of my hotel, and an itinerant opera was performing on the bridge. It is by moonlight that Venice is indeed an enchanted city. The effect of the floods of silver light upon the twinkling fretwork of the Moresco architecture, the total absence of all harsh sounds, the never-ceasing music on the waters, produce an effect upon the mind which cannot be experienced in any other city. As I stood gazing upon the broad track of brilliant light that quivered over the Lagune, a gondolier saluted me. I entered his boat, and desired him to row me to the Grand Canal.

The marble palaces of my ancestors rose on each side, like a series of vast and solemn temples. How sublime were their broad fronts bathed in the mystic light, whose softened tints concealed the ravages of Time, and made us dream only of their eternity! And could these great creations ever die! I viewed them with a devotion, which I cannot believe to have been surpassed in the most patriotic period of the Republic. How willingly would I have given my life to have once more filled their mighty halls with the proud retainers of their free and victorious nobles!

As I proceeded along the canal, and retired from the quarter of St. Mark, the sounds of merriment gradually died away. The light string of a guitar alone tinkled in the distance, and the lamp of a gondola, swiftly shooting by, indicated some gay, perhaps anxious, youth, hastening to the general rendezvous of festivity and love. The course of the canal bent, and the moon was hid behind a broad, thick arch, which black, yet sharply defined, spanned the breadth of the water. I beheld the famous Rialto.

Was it possible? was it true? was I not all this time in a reverie gazing upon a drawing in Winter's studio! Was it not some delicious dream—some delicious dream, from which perhaps this moment I was about to be roused to cold, dull life? I struggled not to wake, yet, from a nervous desire to move and put the vision to the test, I ordered the gondolier to row to the side of the canal, jumped out, and hurried to the bridge. Each moment, I expected that the arch would tremble and part, and that the surrounding palaces would dissolve into mist,—that the lights would be extinguished and the music cease, and that I should find myself in my old chamber in my father's house.

I hurried along; I was anxious to reach the centre of the bridge before I woke. It seemed like the crowning incident of a dream, which, it is remarkable, never occurs, and which, from the very anxiety it occasions, only succeeds in breaking our magical slumbers.

I stood upon Rialto; I beheld on each side of me, rising out of the waters, which they shadowed with their solemn image, those colossal and gorgeous structures raised from the spoils of the teeming Orient, with their pillars of rare marbles, and their costly portals of jasper, and porphyry, and agate; I beheld them ranged in majestic order, and streaming with the liquid moonlight. Within these walls my father revelled!

I bowed my head, and covered my face with my hands. I could gaze no more upon that fair but melancholy vision.

A loud but melodious chorus broke upon the air. I looked up, and marked the tumultuous waving of many torches, and heard the trampling of an approaching multitude. They were at the foot of the bridge. They advanced, they approached. A choir of priests, bearing in triumph the figure of a Saint, and followed by a vast crowd carrying lights, and garlands, and banners, and joining in a joyful hymn, swept by me. As they passed they sung—

“WAVE YOUR BANNERS! SOUND, SOUND YOUR VOICES! FOR HE HAS COME, HE HAS COME! OUR SAINT AND OUR LORD! HE HAS COME, IN PRIDE AND IN GLORY, TO GREET WITH LOVE HIS ADRIAN BRIDE.”

It is singular, but these words struck me as applicable to myself. The dream at the foot of the Alps, and the inscription in the garden on the Brenta, and the picture in the chapel—there was a connection in all these strange incidents, which indeed harmonised with my early life and feelings. I fully believed myself the object of an omnipotent Destiny, over which I had no control. I delivered myself up without a struggle to the eventful course of time. I returned home pensive, yet prepared for a great career, and when the drum of the Hungarian guard sounded as I entered the Lagune, I could not help fancying that its hurried note was ominous of surprise and consternation. I remembered that, when a boy, sauntering with Musæus, I believed that I had a predisposition for conspiracies, and I could not forget that, of all places in the world, Venice was the one in which I should most desire to find myself a conspirator.

I returned to the hotel, but, as I was little inclined to slumber, I remained walking up and down the gallery, which, on my arrival, amid the excitement of so many distracting objects, I had but slightly noticed. I was struck by its size and its magnificence, and, as I looked upon the long row of statues gleaming in the white moonlight, I could not refrain from pondering over the melancholy fortunes of the high race who had lost this sumptuous inheritance commemorating, even in its present base uses, their noble exploits, magnificent tastes, and costly habits.

Lausanne entered. I inquired, if he knew to what family of the Republic this building had originally belonged?

"This was the Palazzo Contarini, Sir."

I was glad that he could not mark my agitation.

"I thought," I rejoined after a moment's hesitation, "I thought the Palazzo Contarini was on the Grand Canal."

"There is a Palazza Contarini on the Grand Canal, Sir, but this is the original palace of the House. When I travelled with my lord, twenty-five years ago, and was at Venice, the Contarini family still maintained both establishments."

"And now?" I inquired. This was the first time that I had ever held any conversation with Lausanne, for, although I was greatly pleased with his talents, and could not be insensible to his everwatchful care, I had from the first suspected that he was a secret agent of my father's, and although I thought fit to avail myself of his abilities, I had studiously withheld from him my confidence.

"The family of Contarini is, I believe, extinct," replied Lausanne.

"Ah!" Then thinking that something should be said to account for my ignorance of that with which, apparently, I ought

to have been well acquainted, I added in a careless voice, "We have never kept up any intercourse with our Italian connections, which I do not regret, for I shall not enter into society here."

The moment that I uttered this I felt the weakness of attempting to mystify Lausanne, who probably knew much more of the reasons of this non-intercourse than myself. He was moving away, when I called him back with the intention of speaking to him fully upon the subject of my early speculations. I longed to converse with him about my mother, and my father's youth, about everything that had happened.

"Lausanne," I said.

He returned. The moon shone brightly upon his imperturbable and inscrutable countenance. I saw only my father's spy. A feeling of false shame prevented me from speaking. I did not like frankly to confess my ignorance upon such delicate subjects to one who would probably affirm his inability to enlighten me, and I knew enough of him to be convinced that I could not acquire by stratagem that which he would not willingly communicate.

"Lausanne," I said, "take lights into my room. I am going to bed."

CHAPTER VI.

ANOTHER sun rose upon Venice, and presented to me the city, whose image I had so early acquired. In the heart of a multitude there was stillness. I looked out from the balcony on the crowded quays of yesterday; one or two idle porters were stretched in sleep on the scorching pavement, and a solitary gondola stole over the gleaming waters. This was all.

It was the Villeggiatura, and the absence of the nobility from the city invested it with an aspect even more deserted than it would otherwise have exhibited. I cared not for this. For me, indeed, Venice, silent and desolate, owned a greater charm than it could have commanded with all its feeble imitation of the worthless bustle of a modern metropolis. I congratulated myself on the choice season of the year in which I had arrived at this enchanting city. I do not think that I could have endured to be disturbed by the frivolous sights and sounds of society, before I had formed a full acquaintance with all those marvels of art that command our constant admiration while gliding about the lost capital of the Doges, and before I had yielded a free flow to those feelings of

poetic melancholy which swell up in the soul as we contemplate this memorable theatre of human action, wherein have been performed so many of man's most famous and most graceful deeds.

If I were to assign the particular quality which conduces to that dreamy and voluptuous existence which men of high imagination experience in Venice, I should describe it as the feeling of abstraction which is remarkable in that city and peculiar to it. Venice is the only city which can yield the magical delights of solitude. All is still and silent. No rude sound disturbs your reveries; Fancy, therefore, is not put to flight. No rude sound distracts your self-consciousness. This renders existence intense. We feel everything. And we feel thus keenly in a city not only eminently beautiful, not only abounding in wonderful creations of art, but each step of which is hallowed ground, quick with associations that, in their more various nature, their nearer relation to ourselves, and perhaps their more picturesque character, exercise a greater influence over the imagination than the more antique story of Greece and Rome. We feel all this in a city, too, which, although her lustre be indeed dimmed, can still count among her daughters maidens fairer than the orient pearls with which her warriors once loved to deck them. Poetry, tradition, and love, these are the graces that have invested with an ever-charming cestus this aphrodite of cities.

As for myself, ere the year drew to a close, I was so captivated with the life of blended contemplation and pleasure which I led in this charming city, that I entirely forgot my great plan of comprehensive travel that was to induce such important results; and, not conceiving that earth could yield me a spot where time could flow on in a more beautiful and tranquil measure, more exempt from worldly anxiety and more free from vulgar thoughts, I determined to become a Venetian resident. So I quitted the house of my fathers, which its proprietor would not give up to me, and in which, under its present fortune, I could not bear to live, converted Lausanne into a major-domo, and engaged a palace on the Grand Canal.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE is in Venice a very ancient church, situate in an obscure quarter of the city, whither I was in the habit of often resorting. It is full of the tombs of Contarinis. Two doges under their fretwork canopies, with their hands crossed over their breasts and

their heads covered with their caps of state, and reposing on pillows, lie on each side of the altar. On the platform before the church, as you ascend the steps from your gondola, is a colossal statue of a Contarini who defeated the Genoese. It is a small church, built and endowed by the family. Masses are there to this day sung for their souls.

One sunshiny afternoon I entered this church, and repaired, as it was my custom, to the altar, which, with its tombs, was partially screened from the body of the building, being lighted by the large window in front, which considerably overtopped the screen. They were singing a mass in the nave, and I placed myself at the extreme side of the altar, in the shade of one of the tombs, and gazed upon the other. The sun was nearly setting; the opposite tomb was bathed with the soft, warm light which streamed in from the window. I remained watching the placid and heroic countenance of the old doge, the sunlight playing on it till it seemed to smile. The melodious voices of the choir, praying for Contarini, came flowing along the roof with so much sentiment and sweetness that I was soon wrapped in self-oblivion; and although my eye was apparently fixed upon the tomb, my mind wandered in delightful abstraction.

A temporary cessation of the music called me to myself. I looked around, and, to my surprise, I beheld a female figure kneeling before the altar. At this moment the music recommenced. She evidently did not observe me. She threw over her shoulders the black veil, with which her face had hitherto been covered. Her eyes were fixed upon the ground, her hands raised, and pressed together in prayer. I had never beheld so beautiful a being. She was very young, and her countenance perfectly fair, but without colour, or tinted only with the transient flush of devotion. Her features were very delicate, yet sharply defined. I could mark her long eyelashes touching her cheek; and her dark hair, parted on her white brow, fell on each side of her face in tresses of uncommon length and lustre. Altogether she was what I had sometimes fancied as the ideal of Venetian beauty. As I watched her, her invocation ceased, and she raised her large dark eyes with an expression of melancholy that I never shall forget.

And as I gazed upon her, instead of feeling agitated and excited, a heaviness crept over my frame, and a drowsiness stole over my senses. Enraptured by her presence, anxiously desirous to ascertain who she might be, I felt, to my consternation, each moment more difficulty in moving, even in seeing. The tombs, the altar, the kneeling suppliant, moved confusedly together and mingled into mist, and sinking back on the tomb which supported me, I fell, as I supposed, into a deep slumber.

I dreamed that a long line of Venetian nobles, two by two, passed before me, and as they passed they saluted me; and the two doges were there, and as they went by they smiled and waved their bonnets. And suddenly there appeared my father alone, and he was dressed in a northern dress, the hunting-dress I wore in the forest of Jonsterna, and he stopped and looked upon me with great severity, and I withdrew my eye, for I could not bear his glance, and when I looked up again he was not there, but the lady of the altar. She stood before me, clinging to a large crucifix, a large crucifix of ebony, the same that I had beheld in the chapel in the gardens on the Brenta. The tears hung quivering on her agitated face. I would have rushed forward to console her, but I awoke.

I awoke, looked round, and remembered everything. She was not there. It was twilight, and the tombs were barely perceptible. All was silent. I stepped forth from the altar into the body of the church, where a single acolyte was folding up the surplices and placing them in a trunk. I inquired if he had seen any lady go out; but he had seen nothing. He stared at my puzzled look, which was the look of a man roused from a very vivid dream. I went forth; one of my gondoliers was lying on the steps. I asked him also if he had seen any lady go out. He assured me that no person had come forth, except the priests. Was there any other way? They believed not. I endeavoured to re-enter the church to examine, but it was locked.

CHAPTER VIII.

If ever the science of metaphysics ceases to be a frivolous assemblage of unmeaning phrases, and we attempt to acquire that knowledge of our nature which is, doubtless, open to us by the assistance of facts instead of words; if ever, in short, the philosophy of the human mind shall be based on demonstration instead of dogma, the strange incident just related will, perhaps, not be considered the wild delusion of a crack-brained visionary. For myself, I have no doubt that the effect produced upon me by the lady in the church was a magnetic influence, and that the slumber, which at the moment occasioned me so much annoyance and so much astonishment, was nothing less than a luminous trance.

I knew nothing of these high matters then, and I returned to my palace in a state of absolute confusion. It was so reasonable to believe that I had fallen asleep, and that the whole was a dream.

Everything was thus most satisfactorily accounted for. Nevertheless, I could not overcome my strong conviction that the slumber, which I could not deny, was only a secondary incident, and that I had positively, really, absolutely, beheld kneeling before the altar that identical and transcendent form which, in my dream or vision, I had marked clinging to the cross.

I examined the gondoliers on my return home, but elicited nothing. I examined myself the whole evening, and resolved that I had absolutely seen her. I attended at the church the next day; but nothing occurred. I spoke to the priests, and engaged one to keep a constant observation; still nothing ever transpired.

The Villeggiatura was over; the great families returned; the carnival commenced; Venice was full and gay. There were assemblies every evening. The news that a young foreign nobleman had come to reside at Venice, of course, quickly spread. My establishment, my quality, and, above all, my name, insured me an hospitable reception, although I knew not a single individual, and, of course, had not a single letter. I did not encourage their attentions, and went nowhere, except to the opera, which opened with the carnival. I have a passion for instrumental music, but I admire little the human voice, which appears to me, with all our exertions, a poor instrument. Sense and sentiment, too, are always sacrificed to dexterity and caprice. A grand orchestra fills my mind with ideas—I forget everything in the stream of invention. A prima donna is very ravishing; but while I listen I am a mere man of the world, or hardly sufficiently well bred to conceal my weariness.

The effect of music upon the faculty of invention is a subject on which I have long curiously observed and deeply meditated. It is a finer prelude to creation than to execution. It is well to meditate upon a subject under the influence of music, but to execute we should be alone, and supported only by our essential and internal strength. Were I writing, music would produce the same effect upon me as wine. I should for a moment feel an unnatural energy and fire, but, in a few minutes, I should discover that I shadowed forth only phantoms; my power of expression would die away, and my pen would fall upon the insipid and lifeless page. The greatest advantage that a writer can derive from music is, that it teaches most exquisitely the art of development. It is in remarking the varying recurrence of a great composer to the same theme, that a poet may learn how to dwell upon the phases of a passion, how to exhibit a mood of mind under all its alternations, and gradually to pour forth the full tide of feeling.

The last week of the carnival arrived, in which they attempt to compress all the frolic that should be diffused over the rest of the

forty days, which, it must be confessed, are dull enough. At Venice the beauty and the wildness of the carnival still linger. St. Mark's Place was crowded with masques. It was even more humorous to observe these grotesque forms in repose than in action; to watch a monster, with a nose a foot long and asses' ears, eating an ice; or a mysterious being, with a face like a dolphin, refreshing herself with a fan as huge as a parasol. The houses were clothed with carpets and tapestry; every place was illuminated, and everybody pelted with sweetmeats and sugar-plums. No one ever seemed to go to bed; the water was covered with gondolas, and everybody strummed a guitar.

During the last nights of the carnival it is the practice to convert the opera house into a ball-room, and, on these occasions, the highest orders are masqued. The scene is, indeed, very gay and amusing. In some boxes a supper is always ready, at which all guests are welcome. But masqued you must be. It is even strict etiquette on these occasions for ladies to ramble about the theatre unattended, and the great diversion of course is the extreme piquancy of the incognito conversations; since, in a limited circle, in which few are unknown to each other, it is not difficult to impregnate this slight parley with a sufficient quantity of Venetian salt.

I went to one of these balls, as I thought something amusing might occur. I went in a domino, and was careful not to enter my box, lest I should be discovered. As I was sauntering along one of the rooms near the stage, a female masque saluted me.

"We did not expect you," she said.

"I only came to meet you," I replied.

"You are more gallant than we supposed you to be."

"The world is seldom charitable," I said.

"They say you are in love."

"You are the last person to consider that wonderful."

"Really quite chivalric. Why! they said you are quite a wild man."

"But you, Signora, have tamed me."

"But do you know they say you are in love?"

"Well, doubtless with a charming person."

"Oh! yes a very charming person. Do you know they say you are Count Narcissus, and in love with yourself?"

"Do they indeed! They seem to say vastly agreeable things, I think. Very witty upon my honour."

"Oh! very witty, no doubt of that, and you should be a judge of wit you know, because you are a poet."

"You seem to know me well."

"I think I do. You are the young gentleman, are you not, who have quarrelled with your papa?"

"That is a very vague description."

"I can give you some further details."

"Pray spare me and yourself."

"Do you know I have written your character?"

"Indeed! It is doubtless as accurate as most others."

"Oh! it is founded upon the best authorities. There is only one part imperfect. I wish to give an account of your works. Will you give me a list?"

"I must have an equivalent, and something more interesting than my own character."

"Meet me to-night at the Countess Malbrizzi's."

"I cannot, I do not know her."

"Do not you know that, in carnival time, a mask may enter any house? After the ball, all will be there. Will you meet me? I am now engaged."

This seemed the opening of an adventure which youth is not inclined to shun. I assented, and the mask glided away, leaving me in great confusion and amazement, at her evident familiarity with my history.

CHAPTER IX.

I ARRIVED at the steps of the Malbrizzi Palace amid a crowd of gondolas. I ascended without any announcement into the saloons, which were full of guests. I found, to my great annoyance, that I was the only mask present. I felt that I had been fairly taken in, and perceiving that I was an object of universal attention, I had a great inclination to make a precipitate retreat. But, on reflection, I determined to take a rapid survey before my departure, and then retire with dignity. Leaning against a pillar, I flattered myself that I appeared quite at my ease.

A lady, whom I had already conjectured to be the mistress of the mansion, advanced and addressed me. Time had not yet flown away with her charms.

"Signor Mask," she said, "ever welcome, and doubly welcome, if a friend."

"I fear I have no title to admission within these walls, except the privilege of the season."

"I should have thought otherwise," said the lady, "if you be one for whom many have inquired."

"You must mistake me for another. It is not probable that any one would inquire after *me*."

"Shall I tell you your name?"

"Some one has pretended to give me that unnecessary information already to-night."

"Well! I will not betray you, but I am silent, in the hope that you will, ere midnight, reward me for my discretion by rendering it unnecessary. We trust that the ice of the north will melt beneath our Venetian sun. You understand me?" So saying, she glided away.

I could not doubt that this lady was the Countess Malbrizzi, and that she was the female mask who had addressed me in the opera house. She evidently knew me. I had not long to seek for the source whence she attained this knowledge. The son of the Austrian Minister at our court, and who had himself been attached to the legation, passed by me. His uncle was governor of Venice. Everything was explained.

I moved away, intending to retire. A group in the room I entered attracted my attention. Several men were standing round a lady, apparently entreating her, with the usual compliments and gesticulations, to play upon the guitar. Her face was concealed from me; one of her suite turned aside, and, notwithstanding the difference of her rich dress, I instantly recognised the kneeling lady of the church. I was extremely agitated. I felt the inexplicable sensation that I had experienced on the tomb, and was fearful that it might end in as mortifying a catastrophe. I struggled against the feeling, and struggled successfully. As I thus wrestled with my mind, I could not refrain from gazing intently upon the cause of my emotion. I felt an overwhelming desire to ascertain who she might be. I could not take my eyes from her. She impressed me with so deep an interest, that I entirely forgot that other human beings were present. It was fortunate that I was masqued, otherwise my fixed stare must have excited great curiosity.

As I stood thus gazing upon her, and as each moment her image seemed more vividly impressed upon my brain, a chain round her neck snapped in twain, and a diamond cross suspended to it fell to the ground. The surrounding cavaliers were instantly busied in seeking for the fallen jewel. I beheld, for the first time, her tall and complete figure. Our eyes met. To my astonishment, she suddenly grew pale, she ceased conversing, she trembled, and sank into a chair. A gentleman handed her the cross; she received it, her colour returned, a smile played upon her features, and she rose from her seat,

The Countess passed me. I saluted her. "I now wish you to tell me," I said, "not my own name, but the name of another person. Will you be kind?"

"Speak."

"That lady," I said, pointing to the group, "I have a very great wish to know who that lady may be."

"Indeed!" said the Countess, "I have a great wish also that your curiosity should be gratified. That is Signora Alcesté Contarini."

"Contarini!" I exclaimed—"how wonderful! I mean to say how singular, that is, I did not know ——"

"That there were any other Contarinis but your excellency, I suppose."

"It is idle to wear this disguise," I said, taking off my mask, and letting my domino slip to the ground. "I have ever heard that it was impossible to escape the penetration of the Countess Malbrizzi."

"My penetration has not been much exercised to-night, Count; but I assure you I feel gratified to have been the means of inducing you to enter a society of which the Baroness Fleming was once the brightest ornament. Your mother was my friend."

"You have, indeed, the strongest claim then to the respect of her son. But this young lady ——"

"Is your cousin, an orphan, and the last of the Contarinis. You should become acquainted. Permit me to present you." I accompanied her. "Alcesté, my love," continued the Countess, "those should not be unknown to each other whom Nature has intended to be friends. Your cousin, Count Contarini Fleming, claims your acquaintance."

"I have not so many relations that I know not how to value them," said Alcesté, as she extended to me her hand. The surrounding gentlemen moved away, and we were left alone. "I arrived so unexpectedly in Venice, that I owe to a chance my introduction to one, whose acquaintance I should have claimed in a more formal manner."

"You are then merely a passing visitor? We heard that it was your intention to become a resident."

"I have become one. It has been too difficult for me to gain this long-desired haven, again to quit it without a very strong cause. But when I departed from my country, it was for the understood purpose of making a very different course. My father is not so violent a Venetian as myself, and, for aught I know, conceives me to be now in France or England. In short, I have played truant, but I hope you will pardon me."

"To love Venice is with me so great a virtue," she replied with a smile, "that I fear, instead of feeling all the impropriety of your conduct, I sympathise too much with this violation of duty."

"Of course, you could not know my father; but you may have

heard of him. It has always been to me a source of deep regret that he did not maintain his connection with my mother's family. I inherit something even more Venetian than her name. But the past is too painful for my father to love to recal it. My mother, you know——”

“I am an orphan, and can feel all your misfortune. I think our house is doomed.”

“I cannot think so when I see you.”

She faintly smiled, but her features settled again into an expression of deep melancholy, that reminded me of her countenance in the church.

“I think,” I observed, “this is not the first time I have had the pleasure of seeing you.”

“Indeed! I am not aware of having before met.”

“I may be wrong; and I dare say you will think me very strange. But I cannot believe it was a dream, though certainly I was—— But really it is too ridiculous. You know the church where are the tombs of our family?”

“Yes!” Her voice was low, but quick. I fancied she was not quite at ease.

“Well, I cannot help believing that we were once together before that altar.”

“Indeed! I have returned to Venice a week. I have not visited the church since we came back.”

“Oh! this must have been a month ago. It certainly is very strange. I suppose it *must* have been a dream; I have sometimes odd dreams, and yet—it is in consequence of that supposed meeting in the church that I recognised you this evening, and immediately sought an introduction.”

“I know the church well. To me—I may say to us,” she added, with a gentle inclination of the head—“it is, of course, a very interesting spot.”

“I am entirely Venetian, and have no thought for any other country. This is not a new sentiment excited by the genius of the place; it was as strong amid the forests and snows of the north—as strong, I may truly say, when a child—as at this moment, when I would peril my life and fortunes in her service.”

“You are, indeed, enthusiastic. Alas! enthusiasm is little considered here. We are, at least, still light-hearted; but what cause we have for gaiety the smilers perhaps know; it is my misfortune not to be one of them. And yet resignation is all that is left us, and——”

“And what?” I asked, for she hesitated.

“Nothing,” she replied,—“nothing. I believe I was going to add, ‘it is better to forget.’”

"Never! The recollection of the past is still glory. Rather would I be a Contarini amid our falling palaces than the mightiest noble of the most flourishing of modern empires."

"What will your father say to such a romance?"

"I have no father. I have no friend—no relation in the world, except yourself. I have disclaimed my parentage, my country, my allotted career, and all their rights, and honours, and privileges, and fame, and fortune. I have at least sacrificed all these for Venice; for, trifling as the circumstance may be, I can assure you that, merely to find myself a visitant of this enchanting city, I have thrown to the winds all the duties and connections of my past existence."

"But why bind your lot to the fallen and the irredeemable? I have no choice but to die where I was born, and no wish to quit a country from which spring all my associations! but you—you have a real country, full of real interests, to engage your affections and exercise your duties. In the north, you are a man; your career may be active, intelligent, and useful; but the life of a Venetian is a dream, and you must pass your days like a ghost gliding about a city, fading in a vision."

"It is this very character that interests me. I have no sympathy with reality. What vanity in all the empty bustle of common life! It brings to me no gratification; on the contrary, most degrading annoyance. It develops all the lowering attributes of my nature. In the world, I am never happy but in solitude; and in solitude so beautiful and so peculiar as that of Venice my days are indeed a dream, but a dream of long delight. I gaze upon the beautiful, and my mind responds to the inspiration, for my thoughts are as lovely as my visions."

"Your imagination supports you. It is a choice gift. I feel too keenly my reality."

"I cannot imagine that you, at least, should either feel or give rise to any other feelings but those that are enchanting."

"Nay! a truce to compliments. Let me hear something worthier from you."

"Indeed," I said seriously, "I was not thinking of compliments, nor am I in a mood for such frivolities; yet I wish not to conceal that, in meeting you this evening, I have experienced the most gratifying incident of my life."

"I am happy to have met you—if, indeed, it be possible to be happy about anything."

"Dear Alcesté—may I call you Alcesté?—why should so fair a brow be clouded?"

"It is not unusually gloomy; my heaven is never serene. But see! the rooms are nearly empty, and I am waited for."

"But we shall soon meet again?"

"I shall be here to-morrow. I reside with my maternal uncle, Count Delfini. I go out very little, but to-morrow I shall certainly be here."

"I shall not exist until we again meet. I entreat you fail not."

"Oh! I shall certainly be here; and in the meantime, you know," she added, with a smile, "you can dream."

"Farewell, dear Alcesté! You cannot imagine how it pains me to part!"

"Adieu!—shall I say Contarini?"

CHAPTER X.

To say that I was in love—that I was in love at first sight—these are weak, worldly phrases to describe the profound and absorbing passion that filled my whole being. There was a mystical fulfilment in our meeting, the consciousness of which mingled with my adoration, and rendered it quite supernatural. This was the Adrian bride that I had come to greet; this was the great and worthy object of so many strange desires, and bewildering dreams, and dark coincidences. I returned to my palace—threw myself into a chair, and sat for hours in mute abstraction. At last the broad light of morning broke into the chamber: I looked up, glanced round at the ghastly chandeliers, thought of the coming eve, and retired.

In the evening I hurried to the opera, but did not see Alcesté. I entered the box of the Countess. A young man rose as I entered, and retired. "You see," I said, "your magic has in a moment converted me into a man of the world."

"I am not the enchantress," said the Countess, "although I willingly believe you to be enchanted."

"What an agreeable assembly you introduced me to last night!"

"I hope that I shall find you a constant guest."

"I fear that you will find me too faithful a votary. I little imagined in the morning that I could lay claim to relationship with so interesting a person as your charming young friend."

"Alcesté is a great favourite of mine."

"She is not here, I believe, to-night?"

"I think not: Count Delfini's box is opposite, and empty."

"Count Delfini is, I believe, some connection?—"

"Her uncle. They will soon be, as you are perhaps aware, nearer connected."

"Indeed!" I said.

"You know that Alceste is betrothed to his son, Count Grimani. By the bye, he quitted the box as you entered. You know him?"

I sank back in my chair, and turned pale.

"Do you admire this opera?" I inquired.

"It is a pretty imitation."

"Very pretty."

"We shall soon change it—very soon. They have an excellent opera at St. Petersburg, I understand. You have been there?"

"Yes. No. I understand, very excellent. This house is very hot." I rose up, bowed, and abruptly departed.

I instantly quitted the theatre, covered myself up in my cloak, threw myself down in my gondola, and groaned. In a few minutes I reached home, where I was quite unexpected. I ran up stairs. Lausanne was about to light the candles, but I sent him away. I was alone in the large dark chamber, which seemed only more vast and gloomy for the bright moon.

"Thank God!" I exclaimed, "I am alone. Why do I not die? Betrothed! It is false! she cannot be another's! She is mine! she is my Adrian bride! Destiny has delivered her to me. Why did I pass the Alps? Heaven frowned upon my passage; yet I was expected—I was long expected. Poh! she is mine. I would cut her out from the heart of a legion. Is she happy? Her 'heaven is never serene.' Mark that. I will be the luminary to dispel these clouds. Betrothed! Infamous jargon! She belongs to me. Why did I not stab him? Is there ne'er a bravo in Venice that will do the job? Betrothed! What a word! What an infamous—what a ridiculous word! She is mine, and she is betrothed to another! Most assuredly, if she be only to be attained by the destruction of the city, she shall be mine. A host of Delfinis shall not balk me!

"Now this is no common affair. It shall be done, and it shall be done quickly. I cannot doubt she loves me. It is as necessary that she should love me as that I should adore her. We are bound together by Fate. We belong to each other. 'I have been long expected.'

"Ah! were these words a warning or a prophecy? Have I arrived too late? Let it be settled at once—this very evening. Suspense is madness. She is mine!—most assuredly she is mine! I will not admit for a moment that she is not mine. That idea cannot exist in my thoughts; it is the end of the world—it is Doomsday for me. Most assuredly she is my Adrian bride—my *bride*, not my *betrothed* merely, but my *bride*.

"Let me be calm. I am calm. I never was calmer in my life. Nothing shall ruffle—nothing shall discompose me. I will have my rights. This difficulty will make our future lives more sweet; we

shall smile at it in each other's arms. Grimani Delfini! if there be blood in that name, it shall flow. Rather than another should possess her, she shall herself be sacrificed!—a solemn sacrifice—a sweet and solemn sacrifice—consecrated by my own doom! I would lead her to the altar like Iphigenia. I—

“O inscrutable, inexorable destiny, which must be fulfilled!—doom that mortals must endure, and cannot direct! Lo! I kneel before thee, and I pray—Let it end! let it end! let it end at once! This suspense is insanity. Is she not mine? Didst thou not whisper it in the solitude of the north? didst thou not confirm it amid the thunder of the Alps? didst thou not reanimate my drooping courage even amid this fair city, which I so much love—this land of long and frequent promise? And shall it not be? Do I exist?—do I breathe, and think, and dare? Am I a man, and a man of strong passions and deep thoughts? and shall I, like a vile beggar, upon my knees crave the rich heritage that is my own by right? If she be not mine, there is no longer Venice—no longer human existence—no longer a beautiful and everlasting world. Let it all cease; let the whole globe crack and shiver; let all nations and all human hopes expire at once; let chaos come again, if this girl be not my bride!”

I determined to go to the Malbrizzi Palace. My spirit rose as I ascended the stairs. I felt confident she was there. Her form was the first that occurred to me as I entered the saloon. Several persons were around her, and among them Grimani Delfini. I did not care. I had none of the jealousy of petty loves. She was unhappy—that was sufficient; and, if there were no other way of disentangling the mesh, I had a sword that should cut this Gordian knot in his best blood. I saluted her. She presented me to her cousin, and I smiled upon one who, at all events, should be my victim.

“I hope we shall make Venice agreeable to you, Count,” said Grimani.

“There is no doubt,” I replied.

We conversed for some time on indifferent subjects. My manner was elated, and I entered into the sparkling contest of conversation with success. The presence of Alceste was my inspiration. I would not quit her side, and in time we were once more alone.

“You are ever gay,” she remarked.

“My face is most joyful when my heart is most gloomy. Happiness is tranquil. Why were you not at the Opera?”

“I go out very little.”

“I went thither only to meet you. I detest those assemblies. You are always surrounded by a crowd of moths. Will you dance?”

"I have just refused Grimani."

"I am glad of it. I abhor dancing; and I only asked you to monopolise your society."

"And what have you been doing to-day? Have you seen all our spectacles?"

"I have just risen. I did not go to bed last night; but sat up musing over our strange meeting."

"Was it so strange?"

"It was stranger than you imagine."

"You are mysterious."

"Everything is mysterious, although I have been always taught the reverse."

"I believe, too," she remarked, with a pensive air, and in a serious tone, "that the courses of this world are not so obvious as we imagine."

"The more I look upon you, the more I am convinced that yesterday was not our first meeting. We have been long acquainted."

"In dreams?"

"What you please. Dreams, visions, prophecies—I believe in them all. You have often appeared to me, and I have often heard of you."

"Dreams are doubtless very singular."

"They come from heaven. I could tell you stories of dreams that would indeed surprise you."

"Tell me."

"When I was about to pass the Alps—but really it is too serious a narrative for such a place. Do you know the villa of the Temple on the Brenta?"

"Assuredly, for it is my own."

"Your own! Then you are indeed mine."

"What can you mean?"

"The temple—the temple!——"

"And did you write upon the wall?"

"Who else? Who else? But why I wrote—that I would tell you."

"Let us walk to the end of these rooms. There is a terrace, where we shall be less disturbed."

"And where we have been long expected."

"Ah!"

CHAPTER XI.

"It is wonderful, most wonderful!" and she leant down, and plucked a flower.

"I wish I were that flower!" I said.

"It resembles me more than you, Contarini," and she threw it away.

"I see no resemblance."

"It is lost."

I picked it up, and placed it near my heart.

"It is found," I replied, "and cherished."

"We are melancholy," said Alcesthé, "and yet we are not happy. Your philosophy—is it quite correct?"

"I am happy, and you should resemble me, because I wish it."

"Good wishes do not always bring good fortunes."

"Destiny bears to us our lot, and Destiny is perhaps our own will."

"Alas! my will is brighter than my doom!"

"Both should be beautiful, and shall ——"

"Oh! talk not of the future. Come Contarini, come, come away."

CHAPTER XII.

SHALL I endeavour to recal the soft transport which this night diffused itself over my being? I existed only for one object; one idea only was impressed upon my brain. The next day passed in a delicious listlessness and utter oblivion of all cares and duties. In the evening I rose from the couch, on which I had the whole day reclined musing on a single thought, and flew to ascertain whether that wizard, Imagination, had deceived me, whether she were, indeed, so wondrous fair and sweet, and that this earth could indeed be graced by such surpassing loveliness.

She was not there. I felt her absence as the greatest misfortune that had ever fallen upon me. I could not anticipate existing four-and-twenty hours without her presence, and I lingered in expectation of her arrival. I could hear nothing of her; but each moment I fancied she must appear. It seemed impossible that so bitter a doom awaited me, as that I should not gaze this night,

upon her beauty. She did not come. I remained to the last silent and anxious, and returned home to a sleepless bed.

The next morning I called at the Delfini Palace, to which I had received an invitation. Morning was an unusual time to call, but for this I did not care. I saw the old Count and Countess, and her ladyship's cavalier, who was the most frivolous and ancient Adonis I had ever witnessed. I talked with them all, all of them, with the greatest good humour, in the hope that Alcesté would at length appear. She did not. I ventured to inquire after her. I feared she might be unwell. She was quite well, but engaged with her confessor. I fell into one of my silent rages, kicked the old lady's poodle, snubbed the cavalier, and stalked away.

In the evening I was careful to be at the Malbrizzi Palace. The Delfinis were there, but not Alcesté. I was already full of suspicions, and had been brooding the whole morning over a conspiracy. "Alcesté is not here," I observed to the Countess, "is she unwell?"

"Not at all. I saw her this morning. She was quite well. I suppose Count Grimani is jealous."

"Hah!" thought I, "has it already come to that? Let us begin, then. I feel very desperate. This affair must be settled. Fed by her constant presence and her smiles, the flame of my passion could for a time burn with a calm and steady blaze—but I am getting mad again. I shall die if this state of things lasts another day. I have half a mind to invite him to the terrace, and settle it at once. Let me see, cannot I do more?"

I mused a moment, quitted the saloon, called the gondola and told them to row me to the Delfini Palace.

We glided beneath that ancient pile. All was dark, save one opened window, whence proceeded the voice of one singing. I knew that voice. I motioned to the gondoliers to rest upon their oars.

"'Tis the Signora Contarini," whispered Tita, who was acquainted with the family.

We floated silently beneath her window. Again she sang.

"I MARKED A ROSE BEDEWED WITH TEARS, A WHITE AND VIRGIN ROSE; AND I SAID, 'O! ROSE WHY DO YOU WEEP, YOU ARE TOO BEAUTIFUL FOR SORROW?' AND SHE ANSWERED, 'LADY MOURN NOT FOR ME, FOR MY GRIEF COMES FROM HEAVEN.'"

"She was silent. I motioned to Tita, who like many of the gondoliers, was gifted with a fine voice to answer. He immediately sang a verse from one of the favourite ballads of his city. While he sung I perceived her shadow, and presently I

observed her in the middle of the apartment. I plucked from my breast a flower, which I had borne for her to the Malbrizzi Palace, and I threw the rose into the chamber.

It fell upon the table. She picked it up, she stared at it for some moments, she smiled, she pressed it to her lips.

I could restrain myself no longer. I pushed the gondola alongside the palace, clambered up the balcony, and entered the room.

She started, she nearly shrieked, but restrained herself.

"You are surprised, Alcesté—perhaps you are displeased. They are endeavouring to separate us; I cannot live without you."

She clasped her hands, and looked up to heaven with a glance of anguish.

"Yes! Alcesté," I exclaimed, advancing, "let me express what my manner has never attempted to conceal—let me express to you my absolute adoration. I love you, my Alcesté; I love you with a passion as powerful as it is pure, a passion which I cannot control, a passion which ought not to be controlled."

She spoke not, she turned away her head, and deprecated my advances with her extended arms.

"Alcesté, I know all. I know the empty, the impious ceremony that has doomed you to be the bride of a being whom you must abhor. My Alcesté is not happy. She herself told me her heaven was not serene—the heaven in whose light I would for ever lie."

I advanced, stole her hand, and pressed it to my lips. Her face was hidden in her arm, and that reclined upon a pillar.

There was silence for a moment. Suddenly she withdrew her hand, and said, in a low but distinct voice, "Contarini, this must end."

"End! Alcesté, I adore you. You—you dare not say you do not love me. Our will is not our own. Destiny has linked us together, and Heaven has interposed to consecrate our vows. And shall a form, a dull, infamous form, stand between our ardent and hallowed loves!"

"It is not that, Contarini, it is not that, though that were much. No, Contarini, I am not yours."

"Not mine, Alcesté! not mine! Look upon me. Think who I am, and dare to say you are not mine. Am I not Contarini Fleming? Are not you my Adrian bride? Heaven has delivered you to me."

"Alas! alas! Heaven keeps me from you."

"Alcesté, you see kneeling before you one, who is indeed nothing, if Fame be what some deem. I am young, Alcesté; the shadow of my mind has not yet fallen over the earth. Yet there is that within me—and at this moment I prophesy—there is that within me, which may yet mould the mind and fortunes of my race

—and of this heart capable of these things, the fountains are open, Alceaté, and they flow for you. Disdain them not, Alceaté, pass them not by with carelessness. In the desert of your life, they will refresh you—yes, yes, they can indeed become to you a source of all felicity.

“I love you with a love worthy of your being; I love you as none but men like me can love. Blend not the thought of my passion with the common-place affections of the world. Is it nothing to be the divinity of that breathing shrine of inspiration, my teeming mind? O! Alceaté, you know not the world to which I can lead you, the fair and glorious garden, in which we may wander for ever.”

“I am lost!” she murmured.

I caught her in my arms; yea! I caught her in my arms, that dark-eyed daughter of the land I loved. I sealed her sweet lips with passionate kisses. Her head rested on my breast; and I dried with embraces her fast-flowing tears

CHAPTER XIII.

I HAD quitted Alceaté so abruptly that I had made no arrangements for our future meeting. Nor, indeed, for some time could I think of anything but my present and overflowing joy. So passionately was I entranced with all that had happened; so deeply did I muse over all that had been said and done; so sweetly did her voice linger in my ear; and so clearly did her fond form move before my vision, that hours elapsed before I felt again the craving of again beholding her. I doubted not that I should find her at the Malbrizzi Palace. I was disappointed, but my disappointment was not bitter, like the preceding eve. I felt secure in our secret loves, and I soon quitted the assembly again to glide under her window. All was dark—I waited. Tita again sang. No light appeared, no sound stirred.

I resolved to call at the palace, to which I had received the usual general invitation. The family were out and at the Pisani Palace. I returned to Madame Malbrizzi's, and looked about for my young Austrian acquaintance. I observed him; and we fell into conversation. I inquired if he knew Count Pisani, and on his answering in the affirmative, I requested him to accompany me to his residence. We soon arrived at the Pisani Palace. I met the Delfinis, but no Alceaté. I spoke to the Countess. I listened to several stories about her lapdog, I even anticipated her ancient cavalier

in picking up her glove. I ventured to inquire after Alceste. They believed she was not quite well. I quitted the palace, and repaired again to the magical window. Darkness and silence alone greeted me. I returned home, more gloomy than anxious.

In the morning Lausanne brought me a letter. I broke the seal with a trembling hand, and with a faint blush. I guessed the writer. The words seemed traced by love. I read:—

“I renounce our vows; I retract my sacred pledge; I deliver to the winds our fatal love.

“Pity me, Contarini, hate me, despise me, but forget me.

“Why do I write? Why do I weep? I am nothing, oh! I am nothing. I am blotted out of this fair creation; and the world, that should bring me so many joys, brings me only despair.

“Do not hate me, Contarini, do not hate me. Do not hate one who adores you. Yes! adores—for even at this dread moment, when I renounce your love, let me, let me pour forth my adoration.

“Am I insensible? am I unworthy of the felicity that for an instant we thought might be mine? O! Contarini, no one is worthy of you, and yet I fondly believed my devotion might compensate for my imperfectness.

“To be the faithful companion of his life, to be the partner of his joy and sorrow, to sympathise with his glory, and to solace his grief—I ask no more. Thou Heaven! wilt thou not smile upon me? Wilt thou, for whom I sacrificed so much, wilt thou not pity me?

“All is silent. There is no sign. No heavenly messenger tells me I may be happy. Alas! I ask too much. It is too great a prize. I feel it, I believe it. My unworthiness is great, but I am its victim.

“Contarini, let this console you. Heaven has declared I am unworthy of you. Were I worthy of you, Heaven would not be cruel. O, Contarini, let this console you. You are destined for higher joys. Think not of me, Contarini, think not of me, and I—I will be silent.

“Silent! And where? O world, which I now feel that I could love, beautiful, beautiful world—thou art not for me—and Heaven, Heaven to whom I offer so much, surely, in this agony, it will support me.

“I must write, although my pen refuses to inscribe my woe; I must write, although my fast-flowing tears bathe out the record of my misery. O my God, for one moment uphold me! Let the future at least purchase me one moment of present calm! Let me spare, at least, him! Let me, at least, in this last act of my love, testify my devotion by concealing my despair.

"You must know all, Contarini. You must know all, that you may not hate me. Think me not light, think me not capricious. It is my constancy that is fatal, it is my duty that is my death.

"You love our country, Contarini, you love our Italy. Fatal Italy! Fly, fly away from us. Cross again those Alps where Heaven frowned upon you as you passed. Unhappy country! I, who was born to breathe amid thy beauty, am the victim of thy usages. You know the customs of this land. The convent is our school—it leads to the cloister, that is too often our doom. I was educated in a Tuscan convent. I purchased my release from it, like many of my friends, and the price was my happiness, which I knew not then how to prize. The day that I quitted the convent I was the betrothed bride of Grimani Delfini. I was not then terrified by that, the memory of which now makes me shudder. It is a common though an unhallowed incident.

"I entered that world of which I had thought so much. My mind expanded with my increased sphere of knowledge. Let me be brief. I soon could not contemplate without horror the idea of being the bride of a man I could not love. There was no refuge. I postponed our union by a thousand excuses; and had recourse to a thousand expedients to dissolve it. Vain struggling of a slave! In my frenzy, the very day that you entered Italy I returned to Florence on the excuse of visiting a friend, and secretly devoted myself to the cloister. The abbess, allured by the prospect of acquiring my property for her institution, became my confidante, and I returned to Venice only to make in secret the necessary preparations for quitting it for ever.

"The Delfinis were on the Brenta. I repaired one day to the villa which you visited, and which, though uninhabited, became, from having been the favourite residence of my father, a frequent object of my visits. As I walked along the terrace, I perceived for a moment, and at a distance, a stranger crossing the lawn. I retired into the chapel, where I remained more than half an hour. I quitted the chapel and walked to the temple. I was attracted by some writing on the wall. I read it, and although I could ascribe to it no definite meaning, I could not help musing over it. I sat down in a chair at the head of the table. Whether I were tired by the walk or overpowered by the heat I know not, but an unaccustomed drowsiness crept over my limbs, and I fell asleep. I not only fell asleep, but I dreamed, and my dream was wonderful and strange.

"I found myself alone in the cloisters of a convent, and I heard afar the solemn chant of an advancing procession. It became louder and louder, and soon I perceived the nuns advancing with the abbess at their head. And the abbess came forward to claim me, and, to my horror, her countenance was that of Grimani Delfini.

And I struggled to extricate myself from her grasp, and suddenly the stranger of the morning rushed in, and caught me in his arms, and the cloisters melted away, and I found myself in a beautiful country,—and I awoke.

“The sun had set. I returned home, pensive and wayward. Never had I thought of my unhappy situation with more unhappiness. And each night the figure of the stranger appeared to me in my dreams, and each day I procrastinated my return to Florence. And in the agitation which these strange dreams produced, I determined to go and pray at the tombs of my fathers. I quitted the Villa Delfini with a single female attendant, and returned to it the same day. I entered the church through a private door from the adjoining building, which was a house of charity founded by our family.

“You know the rest, Contarini. We met. The stranger of my dreams stood before me. My heart, before that meeting, was already yours, and, when you whispered to me that you too —

“Woe! woe! why are we not happy! You said that Heaven had brought us together. Alas! Contarini, Heaven has parted us. I avoided you, Contarini. I flew from the spell which each instant grew stronger. You sought me. I yielded. Yes! I yielded, but long vigils shall atone for that fatal word.

“Go, Contarini, go forth in glory and in pride. I will pray for you, I will ever think of you; I will ever think of my best, my only beloved. All the prosperity human imagination can devise and heavenly love can grant, hover over you! You will be happy, you must be happy. For my sake you will be happy—and I—I am alone, but I am alone with my Redeemer.

“ALCESTE.”

It was read. My spirit was never more hushed in my life; I was quite calm. She might be in a convent, and it might be necessary to burn the convent down, and both of us might probably perish in the flames. But what was death to the threatened desolation? I sent for Lausanne. “Lausanne,” I said, “I have a very high opinion of your talents and energy. I have hitherto refrained from putting them to the test for particular reasons. A circumstance has occurred in which I require not only their greatest exertion, but devotion and fidelity. If you accomplish my wish you are no longer my servant—you are my friend for life. If you fail, it matters little, for I shall not survive. But if you betray me, Lausanne —” and I looked through his very soul.

“The consequences may be fatal to me. I understand you. When I entered your service, you are under a mistake if you consider my fidelity restricted.”

“It is well; I place implicit trust in you: Signora Contarini

has quitted Venice suddenly. Her present abode is a secret: I wish to ascertain it."

"There will be no difficulty, my lord," said Lausanne, with a smile. "There are no secrets in Venice to the rich."

"It is well. I shall remain in this room until I hear from you. I care not how much is expended. Away! and for God's sake, Lausanne, bring me good news."

CHAPTER XIV.

I WALKED up and down the room without stopping. Not an idea crossed my mind. In two hours Lausanne returned.

"Well?" I exclaimed.

"There is, I think, little doubt that the Signora departed for the Villa Delfini. She may now have quitted it. I sent Tita to the palace, as he is acquainted with the household. This is all he could elicit."

"The gondola! Rest you here, Lausanne, and let me know when I return what ships are about to leave the port. Tell the banker I shall want money—a considerable sum; two thousand sequins; and let the bills be ready for my signature. And, Lausanne," I added in a low tone, "I may require a priest. Have your eye upon some fellow who will run over the ceremony without asking questions. If I be any time absent say I am gone to Trieste."

My gondoliers skimmed along. We were soon at Fusina. I shook my purse to the postilion. The horses were ready in an instant. I took Tita with me, as he knew the servants. We dashed off at a rate which is seldom achieved on those dull sandy roads. We hurried on for three or four hours. I told Tita to have his eye for any of the Delfini household. As we were passing the gate of the Villa of the Temple, he turned round on the box, and said, "By the blood of the holy Baptist, your Excellency, there is the little Maria, Signora Alcesté's attendant. She just now entered that side door. I knew her by the rose-coloured ribbons which I gave her last carnival."

"Did she see us?"

"I think not, for the baggage would have smiled."

"Drive back a hundred yards."

It was sunset. I got out of the carriage, and stole into the gardens of the villa unperceived. I could see no lights in the

building. From this I inferred that Alcesté was perhaps only paying a farewell visit to her father's house. I ran along the terrace, but observed no one. I gained the chapel, and instinctively trod very lightly. I glanced in at the window, and perceived a form kneeling before the altar. There was a single taper. The kneeling figure leant back with clasped hands. The light fell upon the countenance. I beheld the face of Alcesté Contarini.

I opened the door gently, but it roused her. I entered.

"I come," I said, "to claim my bride."

She screamed; she leaped upon the altar, and clung to the great ebony cross. It was the same figure and the same attitude that I had beheld in my vision in the church.

"Alcesté," I said, "you are mine. There is no power in heaven or on earth—there is no infernal influence that can prevent you from being mine. You are as much part of me as this arm with which I now embrace you." I tore her from the cross; I carried her fainting form out of the chapel.

The moon had risen. I rested on a bank, and watched with blended passion and anxiety her closed eyes. She was motionless, and her white arms drooped down apparently without life. She breathed—yes! she breathed. That large eye opened, and darkened into light. She gazed around with an air of vacancy. A smile, a faint, sweet smile, played upon her face. She slightly stretched her beautiful frame, as if again to feel her existence, and moved her beautiful arms, as if to try whether she yet retained power over her limbs. Again she smiled, and exclaiming, "Contarini!" threw them round my neck.

"O, my Alcesté! my long-promised Alcesté, you are, indeed, mine."

"I am yours, Contarini!"

CHAPTER XV.

WE walked to the temple, in order that she might compose herself before her journey. I sat down in the same chair, but not alone. Happiness is indeed tranquil—for our joy was full, and we were silent. At length I whispered to her that we must go. We rose, and were about to leave the temple, when she would go back and press her lips on my inscription.

She remembered the maid, whom I had forgotten. I sent Tita to tell his friend that a carriage had arrived from Madame

Malbrizzi's for Alcesthé, who was obliged suddenly to return, and that she was to remain behind. I wrapped Alcesthé in my cloak and placed her in the carriage, and then returned to Venice.

The gondola glided swiftly to my palace. I carried Alcesthé out, and bore her to her apartment. She entreated that I would not quit her. I was obliged, therefore, to receive Lausanne's report at the door. There was no vessel immediately about to depart, but a ship had quitted the port that morning for Candia, and was still beating about in the offing. He had himself seen the captain, who was content to take passengers, provided they would come out to him. This suited my plans. Lausanne had induced the captain to lie-to till the morning. A priest, he told me, was waiting.

I broke to Alcesthé, lying exhausted upon the sofa, the necessity of our instant departure and our instant union. She said it was well; that she should never be at ease till she had quitted Venice; and that she was ready. I postponed our marriage until the night, and wished her to take some refreshment, but she could not eat. Directions were given to Lausanne to prepare for our instant departure.⁹ I resolved to take Tita with me, with whom I was well pleased.

I was anxious about the marriage, because, although I believed it invalid in a Catholic country without a dispensation, it would, as I conceived, hold good in Protestant law. I was careful of the honour of the Contarini, and at this moment was not unmindful of the long line of northern ancestry, of which I wished my child to be the heir.

The ingenuity of Lausanne was always remarkable at conjunctures like the present. The magic of his character was his patience. This made him quicker, and readier, and more successful than all other men. He prepared everything, and anticipated wants of which we could not think.

Two hours before midnight I was united by the forms of the Catholic church to Alcesthé Contarini, the head of the most illustrious house in Europe. Two servants were the only witnesses of an act, to fulfil which she imagined herself perilling her eternal welfare, and which exercised a more certain and injurious influence over her worldly fortunes and reputation.

At daybreak Lausanne roused me, saying that the wind was favourable, and we must be off. He had already despatched Tita to the ship with all our baggage. I rose, wrote to my banker, informing him that I should be absent some time, and requesting him to manage everything for my credit, and then I kissed my still sleeping wife. The morning light fell upon her soft face. A slight flush melted away as I gazed upon her, and she opened her eyes, and smiled. Never had she looked more beautiful. I would

have given half my fortune to have been permitted to remain at Venice in tranquillity and peace.

But doubly sweet is the love that is gained by danger and guarded by secrecy. All was prepared. We stepped, perhaps for the last time, into a gondola. The grey sea was before us; we soon reached the ship. Tita and the captain were standing at the ladder-head. The moment that we embarked the sails were set, and a dashing breeze bore us along out of the gulf. Long ere noon that Venice, with its towers and cupolas, which I had forfeited so much to visit, and all those pleasant palaces wherein I could have lived for ever, had faded into the blue horizon.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ship was an imperial merchant brig. The wife of the captain was on board—a great convenience for Alceste, who was without female attendance, and, with the exception of some clothes which the provident Lausanne had obtained from Tita's sister, without a wardrobe. But these are light hardships for love, and the wind was favourable, and the vessel fleet. We were excellent sailors, and bore the voyage without inconvenience; and the novelty of the scene and the beauty of the sea amused and interested us.

I imbibed from this voyage a taste for a sea life, which future wanderings on the waters have only confirmed. I never find the sea monotonous. The variations of weather, the ingenious tactics, the rich sunsets, the huge, strange fish, the casual meetings, and the original and racy character of mariners, and perhaps also the frequent sight of land which offers itself in the Mediterranean, afford me constant amusement. I do not think that there is in the world a kinder-hearted and more courteous person than a common sailor. As to their attentions to Alceste, they were even delicate; and I am sure that, although a passionate lover, I might have taken many a hint from their vigilant solicitude. Whenever she was present their boisterous mirth was instantly repressed. She never walked the deck that a ready hand was not quick in clearing her path of any impediments, and ere I could even discover that she was weary, their watchful eyes anticipated her wants, and they proffered her a rude but welcome seat. Ah! what a charming voyage was this, when my only occupation was to look upon an ever-beaming face, and to be assured a thousand times each hour that I was the cause of all this happiness!

Lausanne called me one morning on deck. Our port was in sight. I ran up; I beheld the highlands of Candia—a rich, wild group of lofty blue mountains, and, in the centre, the snowy peak of Mount Ida. As we approached, the plain extending from the base of the mountains to the coast became perceptible, and soon a town and harbour.

We were surrounded by boats full of beings in bright and strange costumes. A new world, a new language, a new religion, were before us. Our deck was covered with bearded and turbaned men. We stared at each other in all this picturesque confusion; but Lausanne, and especially Tita, who spoke Greek and knew Candia well, saved us from all anxiety. We landed, and, thanks to being in a Turkish province, there was no difficulty about passports, with which we were unprovided, and a few sequins saved the captain from explaining why his passengers were not included in his ship's papers. We landed, and were lodged in the house of a Greek, who officiated as a European vice-consul.

The late extraordinary incidents of our lives had followed each other with such rapidity that, when we woke in the morning, we could scarcely believe that it was not all a dream. We looked round our chamber with its strange furniture, and stared at the divans, and small, high windows, shadowed with painted glass, and smiled. Our room was darkened, but at the end opened an arch bright in the sun. Beautiful strange plants quivered in the light. The perfume of orange-trees filled our chamber, and the bees were clustering in the scarlet flowers of the pomegranate. Amid the pleasing distraction of these sweet sounds and scents we distinguished the fall of a fountain.

We stole forward to the arch, like a prince and princess just disenchanted in a fairy tale. We stepped into a court paved with marble, and full of rare shrubs. The fountain was in the centre. Around it were delicate mats of Barbary, and small bright Persian carpets; and, crouching on a scarlet cushion, was a white gazelle.

I stepped out, and found our kind host, who spoke Italian. I sent his lovely daughter Alexina, whose cheeks were like a cleft pomegranate, to my wife. As for myself, by Lausanne's advice, I took a Turkish bath, which is the most delightful thing in the world; and when I was reduced to a jelly, I repaired to our host's divan, where his wife and three other daughters, all equally beautiful, and dressed in long flowing robes of different coloured velvets, richly embroidered, and caps of the same material, with tassels of gold, and covered with pearls, came forward. One gave me a pipe seven feet long; another fed me with sweetmeats; a third pressed her hand to her heart as she presented me coffee in a small cup of

porcelain resting in a filagree frame; and a child, who sparkled like a fairy, bent her knee as she proffered me a vase of sherbet. I felt like a pasha, and the good father translated my compliments.

I thought that Alcesté would never appear, and I sent Lausanne to her door fifty times. At length she came, and in a Greek dress, which they had insisted upon her wearing. I thought I had never even dreamed of anything so beautiful. She smiled and blushed a little. We agreed that we were perfectly happy.

This was all very delightful, but it was necessary to arrange our plans. I consulted Lausanne. I wished to engage a residence in a retired part of the island. We spoke to our host. He had a country-house which would exactly suit us, and desired a tenant. I sent Lausanne immediately to examine it. It was only fifteen miles away. His report was most satisfactory, and I at once closed with the consul's offer.

The house was a long, low building, in the Eastern style, with plenty of rooms. It was situate on a very gentle green hill, the last undulation of a chain of Mount Ida, and was completely embowered in gardens and plantations of olive and orange. It was about two miles from the sea, which appeared before us in a wild and rocky bay. A peasant who cultivated the gardens, with his wife and children—two daughters just breaking into womanhood and a young son—were offered to us as servants. Nothing could be more convenient. Behold us at length at rest.

CHAPTER XVII.

I HAVE arrived at a period of my life which, although it afforded me the highest happiness that was ever the lot of man, of which the recollection is now my never-ceasing solace, and to enjoy the memory of which is alone worth existence, cannot prove very interesting to those who have been sufficiently engaged by my history to follow me to my retirement in ancient Crete.

My life was now monotonous, for my life was only love.

I know not the palling of passion of which some write. I have loved only once, and the recollection of the being to whom I was devoted fills me at this moment with as much rapture as when her virgin charms were first yielded to my embrace. I cannot comprehend the sneers of witty rakes at what they call constancy. If beings are united by any other consideration but love, constancy is

of course impossible, and, I think, unnecessary. To a man who is in love, the thought of another woman is uninteresting, if not repulsive. Constancy is human nature. Instead of love being the occasion of all the misery of this world, as is sung by fantastic bards, I believe that the misery of this world is occasioned by there not being love enough. This opinion, at any rate, appears more logical. Happiness is only to be found in a recurrence to the principles of human nature, and these will prompt very simple manners. For myself, I believe that permanent unions of the sexes should be early encouraged; nor do I conceive that general happiness can ever flourish but in societies where it is the custom for all males to marry at eighteen. This custom, I am informed, is not unusual in the United States of America, and its consequence is a simplicity of manners and a purity of conduct which Europeans cannot comprehend, but to which they must ultimately have recourse. Primeval barbarism and extreme civilisation must arrive at the same results. Men, under these circumstances, are actuated by their structure; in the first instance, instinctively; in the second, philosophically. At present, we are all in the various gradations of the intermediate state of corruption.

I could have lived with Alcesté Contarini in a solitude for ever. I desired nothing more than to enjoy existence with such a companion. I would have communicated to her all my thoughts and feelings. I would have devoted to her solitary ear the poetry of my being. Such a life might not suit others. Others, influenced by a passion not less ardent, may find its flame fed by the cares of life, cherished by its duties and its pleasures, and flourishing amid the travails of society. All is an affair of organisation. Ours would differ. Among all men there are some points of similarity and sympathy. There are few alike; there are some totally unlike the mass. The various tribes that people this globe, in all probability, spring from different animals. Until we know more of ourselves, of what use are our systems? For myself, I can conceive nothing more idle or more useless than what is styled moral philosophy. We speculate upon the character of man; we divide and we subdivide; we have our generals, our sages, our statesmen. There is not a modification of mind that is not mapped in our great atlas of intelligence. We cannot be wrong, because we have studied the past; and we are famous for discovering the future when it has taken place. Napoleon is First Consul, and would found a dynasty. There is no doubt of it. Read my character of Cromwell. But what use is the discovery, when the consul is already tearing off his republican robe, and snatching the imperial diadem? And suppose, which has happened, and may and will happen again—suppose a being of a different organisation from

Napoleon or Cromwell placed in the same situation—a being gifted with a combination of intelligence hitherto unknown—where, then, is our moral philosophy—our nice study of human nature? How are we to speculate upon results which are to be produced by unknown causes? What we want is to discover the character of a man at his birth, and found his education upon his nature. The whole system of moral philosophy is a delusion, fit only for the play of sophists in an age of physiological ignorance.

I leave these great speculations for the dreariness of future hours. Alceste calls me to the golden sands, whither it is our wont to take our sunset walk.

A Grecian sunset! The sky is like the neck of a dove; the rocks and waters are bathed with a violet light. Each moment it changes; each moment it shifts into more graceful and more gleaming shadows. And the thin white moon is above all: the thin white moon, followed by a single star—like a lady by a page.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE had no books—no single source of amusement but our own society; and yet the day always appeared a moment. I did, indeed, contrive to obtain for Alceste what was called a mandolin, and which, from its appearance, might have been an ancient lyre. But it was quite unnecessary. My tongue never stopped the whole day. I told Alceste everything—all about my youthful scrapes and fancies, and Musæus and my battle, and Winter, and Christianity, and the confounded tragedy, and, of course, “Manstein.” If I ceased for a moment, she always said, “Go on.” On I went, and told the same stories over again, which she reheard with the same interest. The present was so delightful to me that I cared little to talk about the past, and always avoided the future. But Alceste would sometimes turn the conversation to what might happen; and, as she now promised to heighten our happiness by bringing us a beautiful stranger to share our delightful existence, the future began to interest even me.

I had never written to my father since I arrived at Paris. Every time I drew a bill I expected to find my credit revoked, but it was not so; and I therefore willingly concluded that Lausanne apprised him of everything, and that he thought fit not to interfere. I had never written to my father because I cannot dissemble; and, as my conduct ever since I quitted France had been one con-

tinued violation of his commands and wishes, why, correspondence was difficult, and could not prove pleasing. But Alcesté would talk about my father, and it was therefore necessary to think of him. She shuddered at the very name of Italy, and willingly looked forward to a settlement in the north. For myself, I was exceedingly happy, and my reminiscences of my fatherland were so far from agreeable that I was careless as to the future; and, although I already began to entertain the possibility of a return, I still wished to pass some considerable time of our youth inviolate by the vulgar cares of life, and under the influence of a glowing sky.

In the meantime we rambled about the mountains on our little, stout Candiote horses, or amused ourselves in adorning our residence. We made a new garden; we collected every choice flower, and rare bird, and beautiful animal that we could assemble together. Alcesté was wild for a white gazelle ever since we had seen one in the consul's court. They come from a particular part of Arabia, and are rare; yet one was obtained, and two of its fawn-coloured brethren. I must confess that we found these elegant and poetical companions extremely troublesome and stupid; they are the least sentimental and domestic of all creatures; the most sedulous attention will not attach them to you, and I do not believe that they are ever fairly tame. I dislike them, in spite of their liquid eyes and romantic reputation, and infinitely prefer what are now my constant and ever-delightful company—some fine, faithful, honest, intelligent, thorough-bred English dogs.

We had now passed nearly eight months in this island. The end of the year was again advancing. Oh! the happy, the charming evenings, when, fearing for my Alcesté that it grew too cool to walk, we sat within the house, and the large lamp was lit, and the faithful Lausanne brought me my pipe, and the confounded gazelle kicked it over, and the grinning Tita handed us our coffee, and my dear Alcesté sang me some delicious Venetian melody, and then I left off smoking, and she left off singing, and we were happier and happier every day.

Talk of fame and romance—all the glory and adventure in the world are not worth one single hour of domestic bliss. It sounds like a clap-trap, but the solitary splendour with which I am now surrounded tells me too earnestly it is truth.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE hour approached that was to increase my happiness, my incredible happiness. Blessed, infinitely blessed as I was, bountiful Heaven was about to shower upon me a new and fruitful joy. In a few days I was to become a father. We had obtained from the town all necessary attendance: an Italian physician, whose manner gave us confidence, a sage woman of great reputation were at our house. I had myself been cautious that my treasure should commit no imprudence. We were full of love and hope. My Alceste was not quite well. The physician recommended great quiet. She was taking her siesta, and I stole from her side, because my presence ever excited her, and she could not slumber.

I strolled down to the bay and mused over the character of a father. My imagination dwelt only upon this idea. I discovered, as my reverie proceeded, the fine relations that must subsist between a parent and a child. Such thoughts had made no impression upon me before. I thought of my own father, and the tears stole down my cheek. I vowed to return to him immediately, and give ourselves up to his happiness. I prayed to Heaven to grant me a man-child. I felt a lively confidence that he would be choicely gifted. I resolved to devote myself entirely to his education. My imagination wandered in dreams of his perfect character, of his high accomplishments, his noble virtues, his exalted fame. I conceived a philosopher who might influence his race, a being to whom the regeneration of his kind was perhaps allotted.

My thoughts had rendered me unconscious of the hour; the sun had set without my observation; the growing twilight called me to myself. I looked up—I beheld in the distance Alceste. I was surprised, displeased, alarmed. I could not conceive anything more imprudent than her coming forth in the evening, and in her situation. I ran forward to reprimand her with a kiss, to fold her shawl more closely round her, and bear her in my arms to the house. I ran forward speaking at the same time. She faintly smiled. I reached her. Lo! she was not there! A moment before she was on the wide sands. There was no cavern near which she could have entered. I stood amazed—thunderstruck. I shouted “Alceste!”

The shout was answered. I ran back. Another shout; Tita came to me running. His agitated face struck me with awe. He could not speak. He seized my arm and dragged me along. I ran to the house. I did not dare to inquire the cause. Lausanne met

me at the threshold. His countenance was despair. I started like a bewildered man; I rushed to her room. Yet, I remember the group leaning round her bed. They moved aside. I saw Alcesté. She did not see me. Her eyes were closed, her face pale and changed, her mouth had fallen.

"What," I said, "what is all this? Doctor—doctor, how is she?"

The physician shook his head.

I could not speak. I wrung my hands, more from the inability of thought and speech than grief, by which I was not influenced.

"Speak!" I at length said; "is she dead?"

"My lord ——"

"Speak—speak—speak!"

"It appears to me to be desperate."

"It is impossible! Dead! She cannot be dead. Bleed her—bleed her, sir, before me. Dead! Did you say dead? It cannot be. Alcesté! Alcesté! speak to me. Say you are not dead, only say you are not dead. Bleed her, sir, bleed her."

To humour me he took up his lancet and opened another vein. A few dull drops oozed out.

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "see! she bleeds! She is not dead. Alcesté! you are not dead? Lausanne, do something, Lausanne. For God's sake, Lausanne, save her. Do something, Lausanne. My good Lausanne, do something!"

He affected to feel her pulse. I staggered about the room, wringing my hands.

"Is she better?" I inquired.

No one answered.

"Doctor, save her! Tell me she is better, and I give you half—my whole fortune."

The poor physician shook his head. He attempted nothing. I rushed to Lausanne and seized his arm.

"Lausanne, I can trust to you. Tell me the truth. Is it all over?"

"It has too long been over."

"Ah!" I waved my hands and fell.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN my self-consciousness was restored, I found myself in another room. I was lying in a divan in the arms of Lausanne. I had forgotten everything. I called Alcesté. Then the remembrance rushed into my brain.

"Is it true?" I said "Lausanne, is it true?"

His silence was an answer. I rose and walked up and down the room once or twice, and then said in a low voice, "Take me to her room, Lausanne."

I leant upon his arm, and entered the chamber. Even as I entered, I indulged the wild hope that I should find it unoccupied. I could not believe it. Yes, yes, she was dead!

Tall candles were burning in the room; the walls were hung with solemn drapery. I advanced to the bedside, and took her hand. I motioned to Lausanne to retire. We were alone—alone once more. But how alone? I doubted of everything—even of my existence. I thought my heart would burst. I wondered why anything still went on—why was not all over? I looked round with idiot eyes and open mouth. A horrid contortion was chiselled on my face.

Suddenly I seized the corpse in my arms and fiercely embraced it. I thought I could re-animate it. I felt so much, I thought I could re-animate it. I struggled with death. Was she dead? Was she really dead? It had a heavy, leaden feel. I let her drop from my arms. She dropped like a lifeless trunk. I looked round with a silly grin.

It was morning time. The flames of the candles looked haggard. There was a Turkish dagger in the closet. I remembered it, and ran to the closet. I cut off her long tresses, and rolled them round my neck. I locked the door,—stole out of the window, and cunningly watched to observe whether I were followed. No one was stirring, or no one suspected me. I scudded away fleetly, and rushed up the hills without ever stopping. For hours I could never have stopped. I have a faint recollection of chasms, and precipices, and falling waters. I leapt everything, and found myself at length on a peak of Mount Ida.

A wide view of the ocean opened before me. As I gazed upon it, my mind became inflamed—the power of speech was restored to me—the poetry of my grief prevailed.

"Fatal ocean! fatal ocean!" I exclaimed; "a curse upon thy waves, for thou waftedst us to death. Green hills! green valleys! a blight upon your trees and pastures, for she cannot gaze upon them! And thou, red sun! her blood is upon thy beams. Halt in thy course, red sun; halt! and receive my curse!"

"Our house has fallen, the glorious house has fallen; and the little ones may now rise. Eagle! fly away, and tell my father he is avenged. For lo! Venice has been my doom, and here, on this toppling crag, I seal all things, and thus devote Contarini Fleming to the infernal gods."

I sprang forward. I felt myself in the air. My brain span round. My sight deserted me.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN I can again recal existence, I found myself in my own house. I was reclining on the divan, propped up by cushions. My left arm was in a sling: my head bandaged. I looked around me without thought, and then I relapsed into apathy. Lausanne was in the room, and passed before me. I observed him, but did not speak. He brought me refreshment, which I took without notice. The room was darkened. I knew nothing of the course of time, nor did I care or inquire. Sometimes Lausanne quitted the apartment, and then Tita took his place. Sometimes he returned, and changed my bandages and my dress, and I fell asleep. Awake I had no thought, and slumbering I had no dreams.

I remained in this state, as I afterwards learnt, six weeks. One day, I looked up, and, seeing Tita, spoke in a faint voice, and asked for Lausanne. He ran immediately for him, and, while he was a moment absent, I rose from my couch, and tore the curtain from the window. Lausanne entered, and came up to me, and would have again led me to my seat, but I bade him "lighten the room."

I desired to walk forth into the air, and, leaning on his arm, I came out of the house. It was early morn, and I believe the sense of the fresh air had attracted and revived me. I stood for a moment vacantly gazing upon the distant bay, but I was so faint that I could not stand, and Spiro, the little Greek boy, ran, and brought me a carpet and a cushion, and I sat down. I asked for a mirror, which was unwillingly afforded me; but I insisted upon it. I viewed, without emotion, my emaciated form, and my pallid, sunken visage. My eyes were dead and hollow, my cheek-bones prominent and sharp, my head shaven, and covered with a light turban. Nevertheless, the feeling of the free, sweet air, was grateful; and, from this moment, I began gradually to recover.

I never spoke, unless to express my wants; but my appetite returned, my strength increased, and each day, with Lausanne's assistance, I walked for a short time in the garden. My arm, which had been broken, resumed its power; my head, which had been severely cut, healed. I ventured to walk only with the aid of a stick. Gradually, I extended my course, and, in time, I reached the sea-side. There, in a slight recess formed by a small head-land, I would sit with my back against a high rock, feel comforted that earth was hidden from my sight, and gaze for hours in vacancy upon the ocean and the sky. At sunset, I stole home. I found

Lausanne always about, evidently expecting me. When he perceived me returning, he was soon by my side, but by a way that I could not observe him, and, without obtrusion or any appearance of officiousness, he led or rather carried me to my dwelling.

One morning, I bent my way to a small green valley, which opened on the other side of our gardens. It had been one of our most favourite haunts. I know not why I resorted to it this morning, for, as yet, her idea had never crossed my mind any more than her name my lips. I had an indefinite conviction that I was a lost and fallen man. I knew that I had once been happy, that I had once mingled in a glorious existence; but I felt, with regard to the past, as if it were another system of being, as if I had suddenly fallen from a star and lighted on a degenerate planet.

I was in our valley, our happy valley. I stood still, and my memory seemed to return. The tears stole down my face. I remembered the cluster of orange-trees under which we often sat. I plucked some leaves, and I pressed them to my lips. Yet I was doubtful, uncertain, incredulous. I scarcely knew who I was. Not indeed that I was unable to feel my identity; not indeed that my intelligence was absolutely incapable of fulfilling its office; but there seemed a compact between my body and my mind that existence should proceed without thought.

I descended into the vale. A new object attracted my attention. I approached it without suspicion. A green mound supported a stone, on which was boldly, but not rudely sculptured,

“ALCESTE, COUNTESS CONTARINI FLEMING.”

A date recorded her decease.

“It must have been many years ago,” was my first impression; “I am Contarini Fleming, and I remember her. I remember Alceste well, but not in this country, surely not in this country. And yet those orange-trees —

“My wife, my lost, my darling wife, oh! why am I alive? I thought that I was dead! I thought that I had flung myself from the mountain top to join you—and it was all a dream!”

I threw myself upon the tomb, and my tears poured forth in torrents, and I tore up the flowers that flourished upon the turf, and kissed them, and tossed them in the air.

There was a rose, a beautiful white rose, delicate and fragrant; and I gathered it, and it seemed to me like Alceste. And I sat gazing upon this fair flower, and, as my vision was fixed upon it, the past grew up before me, and each moment I more clearly comprehended it. The bitterness of my grief overcame me. I threw

away the rose, and, a moment afterwards I was sorry to have lost it. I looked for it. It was not at my feet. My desire for the flower increased. I rose from the tomb, and looked around for the lost treasure. My search led me to the other side of the tablet, and I read the record of the death of my still-born son.

CHAPTER XXII.

"We must leave this place, Lausanne, and at once."

His eye brightened when I spoke.

"I have seen all that you have done, Lausanne. It is well, very well. I owe you much. I would have given much for her hair, more than I can express. But you are not to blame. You had much to do."

He left the room for a moment, and returned,—returned with the long, the beautiful tresses of my beloved.

"Oh! you have made me so happy. I never thought that I should again know what joy was. How considerate. How very good!"

He broke to me gently, that he had found the tresses around my neck. I rubbed my forehead, I summoned my scattered thoughts, "I remember something," I replied, "but I thought it was a dream. I fancied that in a dream I had quitted the house."

He told me all. He told me that, after a long search, he had found me among the mountains, hanging to the rough side of a precipice, shattered, stark, and senseless. The bushes had caught my clothes, and prevented a fatal fall.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SHIP was about to leave the port for Leghorn. And why not go to Leghorn? Anywhere but Venice. Our arrangements were soon made. I determined to assent to the request of his father, in taking little Spiro, who was a favourite of Alcesté's, and had charge of her gazelles. A Greek father is very willing to see his son anywhere but among the Turks. I promised his family not only to

charge myself with his future fortunes, but also to remit them an annual allowance through the consul, provided they cherished the tomb of their late mistress; and in a fortnight I was again on board.

The mountains of Candia were long in sight, but I avoided them. Our voyage was very long, although not unpleasant. We were often becalmed. The air and change of scene benefited me much. I wonderfully resumed my old habits of reverie; and, as I paced the deck, which I did all day without ceasing, I mused over the past with feelings of greater solace than I ever expected to associate with it. I was consoled by the remembrance of our perfect love. I could not recal on either of our parts a single fretful word, a single occasion on which our conduct had afforded either of us an anxious or even annoying moment. We never had enjoyed those lovers' quarrels which are said to be so sweet. Her sufferings had been intense, but they had been brief. It would have been consolatory to have received her last breath, yet my presence might have occasioned her greater agony. The appearance of her spirit assured me that, at the moment of departure her last thought was for me. The conviction of her having enjoyed positive happiness supported me. I was confident that, had it been possible to make the decision, she would not have yielded her brief and beautiful career for length of days unilluminated by the presence of him, who remained to consecrate her memory by his enduring love—perhaps by his enduring page.

Ah! old feelings returned to me. I perceived that it was impossible to exist without some object, and fame and poetic creation offered themselves to my void heart. I remembered that the high calling to which I was devoted had been silently neglected. I recollected the lofty education and loftier results that travel was to afford, and for which travel was to prepare me. I reminded myself, that I had already proved many new passions, become acquainted with many new modifications of feeling, and viewed many new objects. My knowledge of man and nature was very much increased. My mind was full of new thoughts, and crowded with new images.

As I thus mused, that separation of the mere individual from the universal poet, which ever occurred in these high communings, again took place. My own misfortunes seemed but petty incidents to one who could exercise an illimitable power over the passions of his kind. If, amid the common losses of common life, the sympathy of a single friend can bear its balm, could I find no solace, even for my great bereavement, in the love of nations and the admiration of ages?

Thus reflecting, I suddenly dashed into invention; and, in my almost constant walks on deck, I poured forth a crowd of characters, and incidents, and feelings, and images, and moulded them into a coherent and, as I hoped, beautiful form. I longed for the moment when I could record them on a scroll more lasting than my memory; and, upheld by this great purpose, I entered, with a calm if not cheerful countenance, the famous port of Leghorn.

PART THE FOURTH.

CHAPTER I.

I WAS at length at Florence. The fair city, so much vaunted by poets, at first greatly disappointed me. I could not reconcile myself to those unfinished churches like barns, and those gloomy palaces like prisons. The muddy Arno was not poetical, and the site of the whole place, and the appearance of the surrounding hills, in spite of their white villas, seemed to me confined, monotonous, and dull. Yet there is a charm in Florence, which, although difficult precisely to define, is in its influence very great and growing, and I scarcely know a place that I would prefer for a residence. I think it is the character of art which, both from ancient associations and its present possessions, is forcibly impressed upon this city. It is full of invention. You cannot stroll fifty yards, you cannot enter a church or palace, without being favourably reminded of the power of human thought. It is a famous memorial of the genius of the Italian middle ages, when the mind of man was in one of its spring tides, and in which we mark so frequently what at the present day we too much underrate—the influence of individual character.

In Florence the monuments are not only of great men, but of the greatest. You do not gaze upon the tomb of an author who is merely a great master of composition, but of one who formed the language. The illustrious astronomer is not the discoverer of a planet, but the revealer of the whole celestial machinery. The artist and the politician are not merely the first sculptors and statesmen of their time, but the inventors of the very art and the very craft in which they excelled.

In the study of the Fine Arts they mutually assist each other. In the formation of style I have been, perhaps, as much indebted to music and to painting as to the great masters of literary composition. The contemplation of the Venetian school had developed in me a latent love of gorgeous eloquence, dazzling incident,

brilliant expression, and voluptuous sentiment. These brought their attendant imperfections—exaggeration, effeminacy, the obtrusion of art, the painful want of nature. The severe simplicity of the Tuscan masters chastened my mind. I mused over a great effect produced almost by a single mean. The picture that fixed my attention, by a single group illustrating a single passion, was a fine and profitable study. I felt the power of Nature delineated by a great master, and how far from necessary to enforce her influence were the splendid accessories with which my meditated compositions would rather have encumbered than adorned her. I began to think more of the individual than the species, rather of the motives of man than of his conduct. I endeavoured to make myself as perfect in the dissection of his mind as the Florentine in the anatomy of his body. Attempting to acquire the excellence of my models, I should probably have imbibed their defects—their stiff, and sombre, and arid manner, their want of variety and grace. The Roman school saved me from this, and taught me that a very chaste or severe conception might be treated in a very glowing or genial style. But, after all, I prefer the Spanish to the Italian painters. I know no one to rival Murillo—I know no one who has blended with such felicity the high ideal with the extreme simplicity of nature. Later in life I found myself in his native city, in that lovely Seville, more lovely from his fine creations than even from the orange bowers that perfume its gates, and the silver stream that winds about its plain.

I well remember the tumult of invention in which I wandered day after day amid the halls and galleries of Florence. Each beautiful face that flitted before me was a heroine, each passion that breathed upon the canvass was to be transferred to the page. I conceived at one time the plan of writing a series of works in the style of each school. The splendour of Titian, the grace of Raffaele, the twilight tints of that magician, Guercino, alternately threw my mind into moods analogous to their creations. A portrait in the Pitti palace of Ippolyto de' Medici, of whom I knew nothing, haunted me like a ghost, and I could only lay the spectre by resolving in time to delineate the spirit of Italian Feodality. The seraphic Baptist in the wilderness recalled the solitude I loved. I would have poured forth a monologue amid the mountains of Judæa, had not Endymion caught my enraptured vision, and I could dream only of the bright goddess of his shadowy love.

I thought only of art; and sought the society of artists and collectors. I unconsciously adopted their jargon; and began to discourse of copies, and middle tints, and changes of style. I was in great danger of degenerating into a dilettante. Little objects, as well as great, now interested me. I handled a bronze, and

speculated upon its antiquity. Yet even these slight pursuits exercised a beneficial tendency upon a mind wild, irregular, and undisciplined; nor do I believe that any one can long observe even fine carvings and choice medals without his taste becoming more susceptible, and delicate, and refined.

My mind was overflowing with the accumulated meditation and experience of two years, an important interval in all lives, passed in mine in constant thought and action, and in a continual struggle with new ideas and novel passions. The desire of composition became irresistible. I recurred to the feelings with which I had entered Leghorn, and from which I had been diverted amid the distraction produced by the novelty, the beauty, and the variety of surrounding objects. With these feelings I quitted the city, and engaged the Villa Capponi, situate on a green and gentle swell of the Appennines, near the tower of Galileo.

CHAPTER II.

If there were anything in the world for which I now entertained a sovereign contempt, it was my unfortunate "Manstein." My most malignant critic must have yielded to me in the scorn which I lavished on that immature production, and the shame with which I even recollected its existence. No one could be more sensible of its glaring defects, for no one thought more of them, and I was so familiar with its less defective parts that they had lost all their relish, and appeared to me as weak, and vapid, and silly as the rest. I never labour to delude myself; and never gloss over my own faults. I exaggerate them; for I can afford to face truth, because I feel capable of improvement. And, indeed, I have never yet experienced that complacency with which, it is said, some authors regard their offspring; nor do I think that this paternal fondness will ever be my agreeable lot. I am never satisfied. No sooner have I executed some conception than my mind soars above its creation, and meditates a higher flight in a purer atmosphere. The very exercise of power only teaches me that it may be wielded for a greater purpose.

I prepared myself for composition in a very different mood from that in which I had poured forth my fervid crudities in the Garden-house. Calm and collected, I constructed characters on philosophical principles, and mused over a chain of action which should develop the system of our existence. All was art. I studied

contrasts and grouping, and metaphysical analysis was substituted for anatomical delineation. I was not satisfied that the conduct of my creations should be influenced merely by the general principles of their being. I resolved that they should be the very impersonations of the moods and passions of our mind. One was ill-regulated will; another offered the formation of a moral being; materialism sparkled in the wild gaiety and reckless caprice of one voluptuous girl, while spirit was vindicated in the deep devotion of a constant and enthusiastic heroine. Even the lighter temperaments were not forgotten. Frivolity smiled, and shrugged his shoulders before us, and there was even a deep personification of cynic humour.

Had I executed my work in strict unison with my plan, it would, doubtless, have been a very dull affair; for I did not yet possess sufficient knowledge of human nature to support me in such a creation: nor was I then habituated to those metaphysical speculations which, in some degree, might have compensated by their profundity for their want of entertainment. But Nature avenged herself, and extricated me from my dilemma.

I began to write; my fancy fired, my brain inflamed; breathing forms rose up under my pen, and jostled aside the cold abstractions, whose creation had cost such long musing. In vain I endeavoured to compose without enthusiasm; in vain I endeavoured to delineate only what I had preconceived; in vain I struggled to restrain the flow of unbidden invention. All that I had seen and pondered passed before me, from the proud moment that I stood upon Mount Jura to the present ravishing hour that I returned to my long-estranged art. Every tree, every cloud, every star and mountain, every fair lake and flowing river, that had fed my fancy with their sweet suggestions in my rambling hours, now returned and illumined my pages with their brightness and their beauty. My mind teemed with similes. Thought and passion came veiled in metaphoric garb. I was delighted; I was bewildered. The clustering of their beauty seemed an evidence of poetic power: the management of these bright guests was an art of which I was ignorant. I received them all; and found myself often writing only that they might be accommodated.

I gave up to this work many long and unbroken hours; for I was determined that it should not suffer from a hurried pen. I often stopped to meditate. It was in writing this book that I first learnt my art. It was a series of experiments. They were at length finished, and my volumes consigned to their fate, and northern publisher.

The critics treated me with more courtesy. What seemed to me odd enough then, although no puzzle now, was, that they admired what had been written in haste and without premeditation,

and generally disapproved of what had cost me much forethought, and been executed with great care. It was universally declared a most unequal work, and they were right, although they could not detect the causes of the inequality. My perpetual efforts at being imaginative were highly reprobated. Now my efforts had been entirely the other way. In short, I puzzled them, and no one offered a prediction as to my future career. My book, as a whole, was rather unintelligible, but parts were favourites. It was pronounced a remarkable compound of originality and dullness. These critiques, whatever might be their tenor, mattered little to me. A long interval elapsed before they reached Florence, and during that period I had effectually emancipated myself from the thralldom of criticism.

I have observed that, after writing a book, my mind always makes a great spring. I believe that the act of composition produces the same invigorating effect upon the mind, which some exertion does upon the body. Even the writing of "Manstein" produced a revolution in my nature, which cannot be traced by any metaphysical analysis. In the course of a few days, I was converted from a worldling into a philosopher. I was indeed ignorant, but I had lost the double ignorance of the Platonists—I was no longer ignorant that I was ignorant. No one could be influenced by a greater desire of knowledge, a greater passion for the beautiful, or a deeper regard for his fellow creatures. And I well remember when, on the evening that I wrote the last sentence of this more intellectual effort, I walked out upon the terrace with that feeling of satisfaction which accompanies the idea of a task completed. So far was I from being excited by the hope of having written a great work, that I even meditated its destruction; for the moment it was terminated, it seemed to me that I had become suddenly acquainted with the long-concealed principles of my art, which, without doubt, had been slenderly practised in this production. My taste, as it were in an instant, became formed; and I felt convinced I could now produce some lasting creation.

I thought no more of criticism. The breath of man has never influenced me much, for I depend more upon myself than upon others. I want no false fame. It would be no delight to me to be considered a prophet, were I conscious of being an impostor. I ever wish to be undeceived; but if I possess the organisation of a poet, no one can prevent me from exercising my faculty, any more than he can rob the courser of his fleetness, or the nightingale of her song.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER finishing my work, I read more at Florence than I have at any period of my life. Having formed the principles on which, in future, I intended to proceed in composition, and considering myself now qualified to decide upon other artists, I determined critically to examine the literary fiction of all countries, to ascertain how far my intentions had been anticipated, and in what degree my predecessors might assist me.

It appears to me that the age of versification has passed. The mode of composition must ever be greatly determined by the manner in which the composition can be made public. In ancient days the voice was the medium by which we became acquainted with the inventions of a poet. In such a method, where those who listened had no time to pause, and no opportunity to think, it was necessary that everything should be obvious. The audience who were perplexed would soon become wearied. The spirit of ancient poetry, therefore, is rather material than metaphysical, superficial, not internal. There is much simplicity and much nature, but little passion, and less philosophy. To obviate the baldness, which is the consequence of a style where the subject and the sentiments are rather intimated than developed, the poem was enriched by music and enforced by action. Occasionally were added the enchantment of scenery and the fascination of the dance. But the poet did not depend merely upon these brilliant accessories. He resolved that his thoughts should be expressed in a manner different from other modes of communicating ideas. He caught a suggestion from his sister art, and invented metre. And in this modulation he introduced a new system of phraseology, which marked him out from the crowd, and which has obtained the title of "poetic diction."

His object in this system of words was to heighten his meaning by strange phrases and unusual constructions. Inversion was invented to clothe a common place with an air of novelty; vague epithets were introduced to prop up a monotonous modulation. Were his meaning to be enforced, he shrank from wearisome ratiocination and the agony of precise conceptions, and sought refuge in a bold personification, or a beautiful similitude. The art of poetry was, to express natural feelings in unnatural language.

Institutions ever survive their purpose, and customs govern us when their cause is extinct. And this mode of communicating poetic invention still remained, when the advanced civilisation of

man, in multiplying manuscripts, might have made many suspect that the time had arrived when the poet was to cease to sing, and to learn to write. Had the splendid refinement of Imperial Rome not been doomed to such rapid decay, and such mortifying and degrading vicissitudes, I believe that versification would have worn out. Unquestionably that empire, in its multifarious population, scenery, creeds, and customs, offered the richest materials for emancipated fiction; materials, however, far too vast and various for the limited capacity of metrical celebration.

That beneficent Omnipotence, before which we must bow down, has so ordered it, that imitation should be the mental feature of modern Europe; and has ordained that we should adopt a Syrian religion, a Grecian literature, and a Roman law. At the revival of letters, we beheld the portentous spectacle of national poets communicating their inventions in an exotic form. Conscious of the confined nature of their method, yet unable to extricate themselves from its fatal ties, they sought variety in increased artifice of diction, and substituted the barbaric clash of rhyme for the melody of the lyre.

A revolution took place in the mode of communicating thought. Now, at least, it was full time that we should have emancipated ourselves for ever from sterile metre. One would have supposed that the poet who could not only write, but even print his inventions, would have felt that it was both useless and unfit that they should be communicated by a process invented when his only medium was simple recitation. One would have supposed, that the poet would have rushed with desire to the new world before him, that he would have seized the new means which permitted him to revel in a universe of boundless invention; to combine the highest ideal creation with the infinite delineation of teeming Nature; to unravel all the dark mysteries of our bosoms and all the bright purposes of our being; to become the great instructor and champion of his species; and not only delight their fancy, and charm their senses, and command their will, but demonstrate their rights, illustrate their necessities, and expound the object of their existence; and all this too in a style charming and changing with its universal theme—now tender, now sportive, now earnest, now profound, now sublime, now pathetic; and substituting for the dull monotony of metre the most various, and exquisite, and inexhaustible melody.

When I remember the trammels to which the poet has been doomed, and the splendour with which consummate genius has invested him, and when, for a moment, I conceive him bursting asunder his bonds, I fancy that I behold the sacred bird snapping the golden chain that binds him to Olympus, and soaring even above Jove!

CHAPTER IV.

I HAD arrived at Florence in a very feeble and shattered state of health, of which, as I had never been an habitual invalid, I thought little. My confidence in my energy had never deserted me. Composition, however, although I now wrote with facility, proved a greater effort than I had anticipated. The desire I felt of completing my purpose had successfully sustained me throughout, but, during its progress, I was too often conscious of an occasional but increasing languor, which perplexed and alarmed me. Perfect as might be my conception of my task, and easy as I ever found its execution when I was excited, I invariably experienced, at the commencement, a feeling of inertness, which was painful and mortifying. As I did not dream of physical inability, I began to apprehend that, however delightful might be the process of meditation, that of execution was less delicious. Sometimes I even for a moment feared that there might be a lurking weakness in my nature, which might prevent me from ever effecting a great performance.

I remember one evening as I was meditating in my chamber, my watch lying on the table, and the hour nine, I felt, as I fancied, disturbed by the increased sound of that instrument. I moved it to the other side of the table, but the sound increased, and, assured that it was not occasioned by the supposed cause, and greatly disturbed, I rang for Lausanne, and mentioned the inconvenience. Lausanne persisted in hearing nothing, but, as the sound became even more audible, and as I now believed that some reptile might be in the room, he examined it in all parts. Nothing was perceived; the hum grew louder, and it was not until I jumped up from my seat to assist him in his examination, that I discovered, by the increased sound occasioned by my sudden rise, that the noise was merely in my own ears. The circumstance occasioned me no alarm. It inconvenienced me for the evening. I retired at an earlier hour, passed, as usual, a restless and dreamy night, but fell asleep towards the morning, and rose tolerably fresh.

I can write only in the morning. It is then I execute with facility all that I have planned the preceding eve. And this day, as usual, I resumed my pen, but it was not obedient. I felt not only languid and indolent, but a sensation of faintness, which I had before experienced and disregarded, came over me, and the pen fell from my hand. I rose and walked about the room. My extremities were cold, as of late in the morning I had usually found them. The sun was shining brightly over the sparkling hills. I felt a great desire to warm myself in his beams. I ordered my horse.

The ride entirely revived me. I fancied that I led perhaps too sedentary a life. I determined that, as soon as my book was finished, I would indulge in more relaxation. I returned home with a better appetite than usual, for, since my return from Candia, I had almost entirely lost my relish for food and my power of digestion. In the evening I was again busied in musing over the scene which was to be painted on the coming morn. Suddenly I heard again the strange noise. I looked at my watch. It was exactly nine o'clock. The noise increased rapidly. From the tick of a watch it assumed the loud confused moaning of a bell tolling in a storm, like the bell I had heard at the foot of the Alps. It was impossible to think. I walked about the room. It became louder and louder. It seemed to be absolutely deafening. I could compare it to nothing but the continuous roar of a cataract. I sat down, and looked around me in blank despair.

Night brought me no relief. My sleep, ever since the death of Alceste, had been very troubled and broken, and of late had daily grown less certain and less refreshing. Often have I lain awake the whole night, and usually have risen exhausted and spiritless. So it was on this morning. Cold, faint, and feeble, the principle of life seemed to wax fainter and fainter. I sent for my faithful companion. "Lausanne," I said, "I begin to think that I am very ill."

Lausanne felt my pulse, and shook his head. "There is no wonder," he replied. "You have scarcely any circulation. You want stimulants. You should drink more wine, and give up writing for a time. Shall I send for a physician?"

I had no confidence in medicine. I resolved to exert myself. Lausanne's advice, I fancied, sounded well. I drank some wine; and felt better; but as I never can write under any inspiration but my own, I resolved to throw aside my pen and visit Pisa for a fortnight, where I could follow his prescription, with the additional advantage of change of scene.

My visit to Pisa benefited me. I returned, and gave the last finish to my work.

CHAPTER V.

ALL the Italian cities are delightful; but an elegant melancholy pervades Pisa that is enchanting. What a marble group is formed by the Cathedral, the wonderful Baptistry, the leaning Tower, and the Campo Santo; and what an indication of the ancient splendour

of the Republic! I wish that the world consisted of a cluster of small States. There would be much more genius, and, what is of more importance, much more felicity. Federal Unions would preserve us from the evil consequences of local jealousy, and might combine in some general legislation of universal benefit. Italy might then revive, and even England may regret that she has lost her Heptarchy.

In the Campo Santo you trace the history of Art. There, too, which has not been observed, you may discover the origin of the arabesques of Raffaele. The leaning Tower is a stumbling-block to architectural antiquarians. An ancient fresco in the Campo proves the intention of the artist. All are acquainted with the towers of Bologna: few are aware that, in Saragossa, the Spaniards possess a rival of the architectural caprice of the Pisans.

To this agreeable and silent city I again returned, and wandered in meditation, amid the stillness of its palaces. I consider this the period of my life in which whatever intellectual power I possess became fully developed. All that I can execute hereafter is but the performance of what I then planned; nor would a patriarchal term of life permit me to achieve all that I then meditated. I looked forward to the immediate fulfilment of my long hopes—to the achievement of a work which might last with its language, and the attainment of a great and permanent fame.

I was now meditating over this performance. It is my habit to contrive in my head the complete work before I have recourse to the pen which is to execute it. I do not think that meditation can be too long, or execution too rapid. It is not merely characters and the general conduct of the story that I thus prepare, but the connection of every incident—often whole conversations—sometimes even slight phrases. A very tenacious memory, which I have never weakened by having recourse to other modes of reminiscence, supports me in this process; which, however, I should confess, is a painful and exhausting effort.

I resolved this work in my mind for several months without ever having recourse to paper. It was never out of my consciousness. I fell asleep musing over it: in the morning my thoughts clustered immediately upon it, like bees on a bed of unexhausted flowers. In my rides, during my meals, in my conversations on common topics, I was indeed, the whole time, musing over this creation.

The profound thinker always suspects that he is superficial. Patience is a necessary ingredient of genius. Nothing is more fatal than to be seduced into composition by the first flutter of the imagination. This is the cause of so many weak and unequal works—of so many worthy ideas thrown away, and so many good

purposes marred. Yet there is a bound to meditation; there is a moment when further judgment is useless. There is a moment when a heavenly light rises over the dim world you have been so long creating, and bathes it with life and beauty. Accept this omen that your work is good, and revel in the sunshine of composition.

I have sometimes half believed, although the suspicion is mortifying, that there is only a step between his state who deeply indulges in imaginative meditation, and insanity; for I well remember that at this period of my life, when I indulged in meditation to a degree which would now be impossible, and I hope unnecessary, my senses sometimes appeared to be wandering. I cannot describe the peculiar feeling I then experienced, for I have failed in so doing to several eminent surgeons and men of science with whom I have conversed respecting it, and who were curious to become acquainted with its nature; but I think it was, that I was not always assured of my identity, or even existence; for I sometimes found it necessary to shout aloud to be sure that I lived; and I was in the habit, very often at night, of taking down a volume and looking into it for my name, to be convinced that I had not been dreaming of myself. At these times there was an incredible acuteness, or intenseness, in my sensations; every object seemed animated, and, as it were, acting upon me. The only way that I can devise to express my general feeling is, that I seemed to be sensible of the rapid whirl of the globe.

All this time my health was again giving way, and all my old symptoms were gradually returning. I set them at defiance. The nocturnal demon having now come back in all its fulness, I was forced to confine my meditations to the morning; and in the evening I fled for refuge and forgetfulness to the bottle. This gave me temporary relief, but entirely destroyed my remaining power of digestion. In the morning I often fainted as I dressed; still I would not give in, and only postponed the commencement of my work until my return to Florence, which was to occur in a few days.

I rode the journey through the luxuriant Val d'Arno, attended by Tita. Lausanne and Spiro had returned the previous day. I was late in the evening when I arrived at the villa. I thought, as I got off my horse, that the Falls of Niagara could not overpower the infernal roaring that I alone heard. I entered, and threw myself on a sofa. It came at last. What it was I knew not. It felt like a rushing of blood into my brain. I moaned, threw out my arms, and wildly caught at the bell. Lausanne entered, and I was lying apparently lifeless.

CHAPTER VI.

DURING the whole course of my life my brain had been my constant source of consolation. As long as I could work that machine, I was never entirely without an object and a pleasure. I had laughed at physical weaknesses while that remained untouched; and unquestionably I should have sunk under the great calamity of my life, had it not been for the sources of hope and solace which this faithful companion opened to me. Now it was all over: I was little better than an idiot.

Physician followed physician, and surgeon, surgeon, without benefit. They all held different opinions; yet none were right. They satirised each other in private interviews, and exchanged compliments in consultations. One told me to be quiet: another, to exert myself: one declared that I must be stimulated; another, that I must be soothed. I was, in turn, to be ever on horseback, and ever on a sofa. I was bled, blistered, boiled, starved, poisoned, electrified, galvanised; and at the end of a year found myself with exactly the same oppression on my brain, and the additional gratification of remembering that twelve months of existence had worn away without producing a single idea. Such are the inevitable consequences of consulting men who decide by precedents which have no resemblance, and never busy themselves about the idiosyncrasy of their patients.

I had been so overwhelmed by my malady, and so conscious that upon my cure my only chance of happiness depended, that I had submitted myself to all this treatment without a murmur, and religiously observed all their contradictory directions. Being of a sanguine temperament, I believed every assertion, and every week expected to find myself cured. When, however, a considerable period of time had elapsed without any amelioration, I began to rebel against these systems, which induced so much exertion and privation, and were productive of no good. I was quite desperate of cure; and each day I felt more keenly that, if I were not cured, I could not live. I wished, therefore, to die unmolested. I discharged all my medical attendants, and laid myself down like a sick lion in his lair.

I never went out of the house, and barely out of a single room. I scarcely ever spoke, and only for my wants. I had no acquaintance, and I took care that I should see no one. I observed a strict diet, but fed every day. Although air, and medicine, and exercise were to have been productive of so much benefit to me, I found

myself, without their assistance, certainly not worse; and the repose of my present system, if possible, rendered my wretched existence less burdensome.

Lausanne afterwards told me that he supposed I had relapsed into the state in which I fell immediately after my great calamity; but this was not the case. I never lost my mind or memory: I was conscious of everything; I forgot nothing; but I had lost the desire of exercising them. I sat in moody silence, revolving in reverie, without the labour of thought, my past life and feelings.

I had no hopes of recovery. It was not death that terrified me, but the idea that I might live, and for years, in this helpless and unprofitable condition. When I contrasted my recent lust of fame, and plans of glory, and indomitable will, with my present woeful situation of mysterious imbecility, I was appalled with the marvellous contrast; and I believed that I had been stricken by some celestial influence for my pride and wanton self-sufficiency.

CHAPTER VII.

I WAS in this gloomy state when, one morning, Lausanne entered my room: I did not notice him, but continued sitting, with my eyes fixed on the ground, and my chin upon my breast. At last he said, "My lord, I wish to speak to you."

"Well!"

"There is a stranger at the gate—a gentleman—who desires to see you."

"You know I see no one," I replied, rather harshly.

"I know it, and have so said; but this gentleman——"

"Good God! Lausanne. Is it my father?"

"No; but it is one who may perhaps come from him."

"I will see him."

The door opened, and there entered Winter.

Long years—long and active years—had passed since we parted.

All had happened since. I thought of my boyhood, and it seemed innocent and happy, compared with the misery of the past and present. Nine years had not much altered my friend; but me——

"I fear, Count," said Winter, "that I am abusing the privilege of an old friend in thus insisting upon an entrance; but I heard of your residence in this country, and your illness at the same time, and, being at Florence, I thought you would perhaps pardon me."

"You are one of the few persons whom I am glad to see under all circumstances, even under those in which I now exist."

"I have heard of your distressing state."

"Say my hopeless state. But let us not converse about it. Let us speak of yourself. Let me hope you are as happy as you are celebrated."

"As for that, well enough. But if we are to talk about celebrity, let me claim the honours of a prophet, and congratulate a poet whom I predicted."

"Alas! my dear Winter," I said, with a faint smile, "talk not of that, for I shall die without doing you honour."

"There is no one of my acquaintance who has less chance of dying."

"How so?" I remarked, rather quickly; for when a man really believes he is dying, he does not like to lose the interest which such a situation produces. "If you knew all——"

"I know all—much more, too, than your physician who told me."

"And you believe, then, that I cannot look forward even to death to terminate this miserable existence?"

"I do not consider it miserable; and therefore I should be sorry if there were anything to warrant such an anticipation."

"And I can assure you, Chevalier," and I spoke very sincerely and solemnly, "that I consider existence, on the terms I now possess it, an intolerable burden. And nothing but the chance, for I cannot call it hope, of amelioration, prevents me from terminating it."

"If you remember right, you considered existence equally an intolerable burden when, as a boy, you first experienced feelings which you were unable to express."

"Well! what inference do you draw?"

"That it is not the first time you have quarrelled with Nature?"

"How so?" I eagerly replied, and I exerted myself to answer him. "Is disease Nature?"

"Is your state disease?"

"I have no mind."

"You reason."

"My brain is affected."

"You see."

"You believe, then, that I am an hypochondriac?"

"By no means! I believe that your feelings are real and peculiar; but it does not therefore follow that they are evil."

"Perhaps," I said, with a dry smile, "you believe them beneficent?"

"I do certainly," he replied.

"In what respect?"

"I believe that, as you would not give Nature a holiday, she is giving herself one."

I was silent, and mused. "But this infernal brain," I replied.

"Is the part of the machinery that you have worked most; and therefore the weakest."

"But how is it to be strengthened?"

"Not by medicine. By following exactly a contrary course to that which enfeebled it."

"For fifteen months an idea has not crossed my brain."

"Well! you are all the better for it; and fifteen months more ——"

"Alas! what is life! At this age I hoped to be famous."

"Depend upon it you are in the right road; but rest assured you must go through every trial that is peculiar to men of your organisation. There is no avoiding it. It is just as necessary as that life should be the consequence of your structure. To tell the truth, which is always best, I only came here to please your father. When he wrote to me of your illness, I mentioned to him that it must have its course; that there was nothing to be alarmed about, and that it was just as much a part of your necessary education as travel or study. But he wished me to see you, and so I came."

"My poor father! Alas! my conduct to him ——"

"Has been just what it ought to be—just what it necessarily must have been—just exactly what my own was to my father. As long as human beings are unphilosophically educated, these incidents will take place."

"Ah! my dear Winter, I am a villain. I have never even written to him."

"Of course you have not. Your father tried to turn you into a politician. Had he not forced you to write so many letters then, you would not have omitted to write to him now. The whole affair is simple as day. Until men are educated with reference to their nature, there will be no end to domestic fracas."

"You ever jest, my friend. I have not ventured on a joke for many a long month."

"Which is a pity; for, to tell you the truth, although your last work is of the tender and sublime, and maketh fair eyes weep, I think your forte is comic."

"Do you, indeed?"

"Ah! my dear Contarini, those two little volumes of 'Mannstein' ——"

"Oh! mention not his name. Infamous, unadulterated trash!"

"Ah! exactly as I thought of my first picture, which, after all,

has a freshness and a freedom I have never excelled. But 'Mansstein,' my dear Contarini, it certainly was very impertinent. I read it at Rome. I thought I should have died. All our friends. So very true!"

"Will you stay with me? I feel a good deal better since you have been here; and what you tell me of my father delights me. Pray stay. Well! you are indeed kind. And if I feel very ill, I will keep away."

"Oh! I should like to see you in one of your fits."

CHAPTER VIII.

"TAKE a glass of wine," said Winter, at dinner.

"My dear friend, I have taken one."

"TAKE another. Here is your father's health."

"Well then, here is yours. How is the finest of old men?"

"Flourishing and happy."

"And your mother?"

"Capital!"

"And you have never returned?"

"No! and never will, while there are such places as Rome and Naples."

"Ah! I shall never see them."

"Pooh! the sooner you move about, the better."

"My good friend, it is impossible."

"Why so? Do not confound your present condition with the state you were in a year ago. Let me feel your pulse. Capital! You seem to have an excellent appetite. Don't be ashamed to eat. In cases like yours, the art is to ascertain the moment to make exertion. I look upon yours as a case of complete exhaustion. If there be anything more exhausting than love, it is sorrow; and if there be anything more exhausting than sorrow, it is poetry. You have tried all three. Your body and your mind both require perfect repose. I perceive that your body has sufficiently rested. Employ it; and in another year you will find your mind equally come round."

"You console me. But where shall I go? Home?"

"By no means—you require beauty and novelty. At present I would not go even to the south of this country. It will remind you too much of the past. Put yourself entirely in a new world. Go to Egypt. It will suit you. I look upon you

as an Oriental. If you like, go to South America. Tropical scenery will astonish and cure you. Go to Leghorn, and get into the first ship that is bound for a country with which you are unacquainted."

CHAPTER IX.

WINTER remained with me several days, and, before he had quitted Florence I had written to my father. I described to him my forlorn situation—my strong desire to see him—and I stated the advice which did not correspond with my wishes. I asked for his counsel, but said nothing of the great calamity. I was indeed myself extremely unwilling to return home in my present state, but this unwillingness I concealed.

I received an answer from my father by a special courier—an answer the most affectionate. He strongly recommended me to travel for some time; expressed his hope and confidence that I should entirely recover, and that I should return and repay him for all his anxiety. All that he required was, that I should frequently correspond with him. And, ever afterwards, I religiously respected his request.

A ship was about to sail from Leghorn to Cadiz. Spain appeared an interesting country, and one of which I knew nothing. It is the link between Europe and Africa. To Spain, therefore, I resolved to repair; and in a few days I again quitted Italy, and once more cast my fortunes on the waters!

PART THE FIFTH.

CHAPTER I.

EUROPE and AFRIC! I have wandered amid the tombs of Troy, and stood by the altar of Medea, yet the poetry of the Hellespont and the splendour of the Symplegades must yield to the majesty of the Straits of Calpe.

Like some lone Titan, lurid and sublime, his throne the mountains, and the clouds his crown, the melancholy Mauritania sits apart, and gazes on the mistress he has lost.

And lo! from out the waves, that kiss her feet, and bow before her beauty, she softly rises with a wanton smile. Would she call back her dark-eyed lover, and does the memory of that bright embrace yet dwell within the hallowed sanctuary of her heart?

It was a glorious union. When were maidens fairer and more faithful—when were men more gentle and more brave? When did all that can adorn humanity more brightly flourish, and more sweetly bloom? Alas for their fair cities, and fine gardens, and fresh fountains! Alas for their delicate palaces, and glowing bowers of perfumed shade!

Will you fly with me from the dull toil of vulgar life? Will you wander for a moment amid the plains of Granada? Around us are those snowy and purple mountains, which a Caliph wept to quit. They surround a land still prodigal of fruits, in spite of a Gothic government. You are gazing on the rows of blooming aloes, that are the only enclosures, with their flowery forms high in the warm air; you linger among those groves of Indian fig; you stare with strange delight at the first sight of the sugar-cane. Come away, come away, for on yon green and sunny hill, rises the ruby gate of that precious pile, whose name is a spell and whose vision is romance.

Let us enter Alhambra!

See! here is the Court of Myrtles, and I gather you a sprig.

Mark how exquisitely everything is proportioned—mark how slight, and small, and delicate ! And now we are in the Court of Columns—the far-famed Court of Columns. Let us enter the chambers that open round this quadrangle. How beautiful are their deeply-carved and purple roofs, studded with gold, and the walls entirely covered with the most fanciful fretwork, relieved with that violet tint which must have been copied from their Andalusian skies. Here you may sit in the coolest shade, reclining on your divan, with your beads or pipe, and view the dazzling sunlight in the court, which assuredly must scorch the flowers, if the faithful lions ever ceased from pouring forth that element, which you must travel in Spain or Africa to honour. How many chambers! the Hall of the Ambassadors ever the most sumptuous. How fanciful its mosaic ceiling of ivory and tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl and gold ! And then the Hall of Justice with its cedar roof, and the Harem, and the baths—all perfect. Not a single roof has yielded, thanks to those elegant horse-shoe arches and those crowds of marble columns, with thin oriental capitals. What a scene ! Is it beautiful ? Oh ! conceive it in the time of the Boabdils—conceive it with all its costly decorations, all the gilding, all the imperial purple, all the violet relief, all the scarlet borders, all the glittering inscriptions and precious mosaics, burnished, bright, and fresh. Conceive it full of still greater ornaments, the living groups, with their splendid and vivid and picturesque costume, and, above all, their rich and shining arms, some standing in conversing groups, some smoking in sedate silence, some telling their beads, some squatting round a storier. Then the bustle and the rush, and the coming horsemen, all in motion, and all glancing in the most brilliant sun.

Enough of this ! I am alone. Yet there was one being with whom I could have loved to roam in these imaginative halls, and found no solitude in the sole presence of her most sweet society.

Alhambra is a strong illustration of what I have long thought, that however there may be a standard of taste, there is no standard of style. I must place Alhambra with the Parthenon, the Pantheon, the Cathedral of Seville, the temple of Dendera. They are different combinations of the same principles of taste. Thus we may equally admire *Æschylus*, *Virgil*, *Calderon*, and *Ferdousi*. There never could have been a controversy on such a point, if mankind had not confused the ideas of taste and style. The Saracenic architecture is the most inventive and fanciful, but at the same time the most fitting and delicate that can be conceived. There would be no doubt about its title to be considered among the finest inventions of man, if it were better known. It is only to be found, in any degree of European perfection, in Spain. Some of the tombs of the Mamlouk Sultans in the desert round Cairo, wrongly styled

by the French "the tombs of the Caliphs," are equal, I think, to Alhambra. When a person sneers at the Saracenic, ask him what he has seen? Perhaps a barbarous, although picturesque, building, called the Ducal Palace at Venice. What should we think of a man who decided on the architecture of Agrippa by the buildings of Justinian, or judged the age of Pericles by the restorations of Hadrian? Yet he would not commit so great a blunder. There is a Moorish palace, the Alcazar, at Seville, a huge mosque at Cordova turned into a Cathedral, with partial alteration, Alhambra at Granada—these are the great specimens in Europe, and sufficient for all study. There is a shrine and a chapel of a Moorish saint at Cordova, quite untouched, with the blue mosaic and the golden honeycomb roof, as vivid and as brilliant as when the Santon was worshipped. I have never seen any work of art so exquisite. The materials are the richest, the ornaments the most costly, and in detail, the most elegant and the most novel, the most fanciful and the most flowing, that I ever contemplated. And yet nothing at the same time can be conceived more just than the proportion of the whole, and more mellowed than the blending of the parts, which indeed Palladio could not excel.

CHAPTER II.

A SPANISH city sparkling in the sun, with its white walls and verdant jalousies, is one of the most cheerful and most brilliant of the works of man. Figaro is in every street, and Rosina in every balcony.

The Moorish remains, the Christian churches, the gay national dress, a gorgeous priesthood, ever producing, in their dazzling processions and sacred festivals, an effect upon the business of the day; the splendid pictures of a school of which we know nothing, theatres, alamedas, tertullas, bull-fights, boleros,—here is matter enough for amusement within the walls: and now let us see how they pass their time out of them.

When I was in the south of Spain the whole of Andalusia was overrun with robbers. These bands, unless irritated by a rash resistance, have of late seldom committed personal violence, but only lay you on the ground and clear out your pockets. If however you have less than an ounce of gold, they shoot you. That is their tariff, which they have announced at all the principal towns, and, it must be confessed, a light one. A weak government resolves

society into its original elements, and robbery in Spain has become more honourable than war, inasmuch as the robber is paid, and the soldier is in arrear. The traveller must defend himself. Some combine, some compromise. Merchants travel in corsarios or caravans well armed; persons of quality take a military escort, who, if cavalry, scamper off the moment they are attacked, and, if infantry, remain and participate in the plunder. The government is only anxious about the post, and to secure that pay the brigands black mail.

The country is thinly populated, with few villages or farm-houses, but many towns and cities. It chiefly consists of vast plains of pasture-land, which, sunburnt in the summer, were a good preparation for the desert and intervening mountainous districts, such as the Sierra Morena, famous in Cervantes, the Sierra Nevada of Granada, and the Sierra da Ronda, a country like the Abruzzi, entirely inhabited by brigands and smugglers, and which I once explored. I must say that the wild beauty of the scenery entirely repaid me for some peril and very great hardship. Returning from this district towards Cadiz you arrive at Orense, one of the finest mountain-passes in the world. Its precipices and cork woods would have afforded inexhaustible studies to Salvator. All this part of the country is full of pictures, and of a peculiar character. I recommend Castellar to an adventurous artist.

I travelled over Andalusia on horseback, and, in spite of many warnings, without any escort, or any companions but Lausanne and Tita, and little Spiro and the muleteers, who walk and occasionally increase the burden of a sumpter steed. In general, like all the Spanish peasants, they are tall, finely-made fellows, looking extremely martial, with their low, round, black velvet hats, and coloured sashes, embroidered jackets, and brilliant buttons. We took care not to have too much money, and no baggage that we could not stow in our saddle-bags. I even followed the advice of an experienced guide, and was as little ostentatious as possible of my arms; for to a Spanish bandit foreign pistols are sometimes a temptation, instead of a terror. Such prudent humility will not, however, answer in the East, where you cannot be too well or too magnificently armed.

We were, in general, in our saddles at four o'clock, and stopped, on account of the heat, from ten till five in the evening, and then proceeded for three or four hours more. I have travelled through three successive nights, and seen the sun set and rise without quitting my saddle, which all men cannot say. It is impossible to conceive anything more brilliant than an Andalusian summer moon. You lose nothing of the landscape, which is only softened, not obscured; and absolutely the beams are warm.

Generally speaking, we contrived to reach, for our night's bivouac, some village which usually boasts a posada. If this failed there was sometimes a convent; and were we unfortunate in this expedient, we made pillows of our saddles and beds of our cloaks. A posada is, in fact, a khan, and a very bad one. The same room holds the cattle, the kitchen, the family, and boards and mats for travellers to sleep on. Your host affords no provisions, and you must cater as you proceed; and, what is more, cook when you have catered. Yet the posada, in spite of so many causes, is seldom dirty; for the Spaniards, notwithstanding their reputation, I claim the character of the most cleanly nation in Europe. Nothing is more remarkable than the delicacy of the lower orders. All that frequent whitewash and constant ablution can effect against a generating sun they employ. You would think that a Spanish woman had no other occupation than to maintain the cleanliness of her chamber. They have, indeed, too much self-respect not to be clean. I once remember Lausanne rating a muleteer, who was somewhat tardy in his preparations. "What!" exclaimed the peasant reproachfully, "would you have me go without a clean shirt?" Now, when we remember that this man only put on his clean shirt to toil on foot for thirty or forty miles, we may admire his high feeling, and doubt whether we might match this incident even by that wonder—an English postillion.

Certainly the Spaniards are a noble race. They are kind and faithful, courageous and honest, with a profound mind, that will nevertheless break into rich humour, and a dignity which, like their passion, is perhaps the legacy of their oriental sires.

But see! we have gained the summit of the hill. Behold! the noble range of the Morena mountains extends before us, and at their base is a plain worthy of such a boundary. Yon river, winding amid bowers of orange, is the beautiful Guadalquivir; and that city, with its many spires and mighty mosque, is the famous Cordova!

CHAPTER III.

THE court-yard was full of mules, a body of infantry were bivouacking under the colonnades. There were several servants, all armed, and a crowd of muleteers with bludgeons.

"'Tis a great lady from Madrid, sir," observed Tita, who was lounging in the court.

I had now been several days at Cordova, and intended to depart

at sunset for Granada. The country between these two cities is more infested by brigands than any tract in Spain. The town rang with their daring exploits. Every traveller during the last month had been plundered; and, only the night before my arrival, they had, in revenge for some attempt of the governor to interfere, burned down a farm-house a few miles without the gates.

When I entered the hotel, the landlord came up to me and advised me to postpone my departure for a few hours, as a great lady from Madrid was about to venture the journey, and depart at midnight towards Malaga with a strong escort. He doubted not that she would consent with pleasure to my joining their party. I did not feel, I fear, as grateful for his proposition as I ought to have been. I was tired of Cordova; I had made up my mind to depart at a particular hour. I had hitherto escaped the brigands; I began to suspect that their activity was exaggerated. At the worst, I apprehended no great evil. Some persons always escaped, and I was confident in my fortune.

"What is all this?" I inquired of Lausanne.

"'Tis a great lady from Madrid," replied Lausanne.

"And have you seen her?"

"I have not, sir; but I have seen her husband."

"Oh! she has a husband; then I certainly will not stop. At sunset we go."

In half an hour's time the landlord again entered my room, with an invitation from the great lady and her lord to join them at dinner. Of course I could not refuse, although I began to suspect that my worthy host, in his considerate suggestions, had perhaps been influenced by other views than merely my security.

I repaired to the saloon. It was truly a *Gil Blas* scene. The grandee, in an undress uniform, and highly imposing in appearance, greeted me with dignity. He was of middle age, with a fine form and a strongly-marked, true Castilian countenance, but very handsome. The senora was exceedingly young, and really very pretty, with infinite vivacity and grace. A French valet leant over the husband's chair; and a duenna, broad and supercilious, with beady jet eyes, mahogany complexion, and cocked-up nose, stood by her young mistress, refreshing her with a huge fan.

After some general and agreeable conversation, the senor introduced the intended journey; and, understanding that I was about to proceed in the same direction, offered me the advantage of his escort. The dama most energetically impressed upon me the danger of travelling alone, and I was brutal enough to suspect that she had more confidence in foreign aid than in the courage of her countrymen.

I was in one of those ungallant fits that sometimes come over

men of shattered nerves. I had looked forward with moody pleasure to a silent moonlit ride. I shrunk from the constant effort of continued conversation. It did not appear that my chivalry would be grievously affected, if an almost solitary cavalier were to desert a dame environed by a military force and a band of armed retainers. In short, I was not seduced by the prospect of security, and rash enough to depart alone.

The moon rose. I confess our anxiety. The muleteer prophesied an attack. "They will be out," said he, "for the great lady; we cannot escape." We passed two travelling friars on their mules, who gave us their blessing, and I observed to-night by the road side more crosses than usual, and each of these is indicative of a violent death. We crossed an immense plain, and entered a mule track through uneven ground. We were challenged by a picquet, and I, who was ahead, nearly got shot for answering. It was a corsario of armed merchants returning from the fair of Ronda. We stopped and made inquiries, but could learn nothing, and we continued our journey for several hours, in silence, by the most brilliant moon. We began to hope we had escaped, when suddenly a muleteer informed us that he could distinguish a trampling of horse in the distance. Ave, Maria! A cold perspiration came over us. Decidedly they approached. We drew up out of pure fear. I had a pistol in one hand and a purse in the other, to act according to circumstances. The band were clearly in sight. I was encouraged by finding that they were a rather uproarious crew. They turned out to be a company of actors travelling to Cordova. There were dresses and decorations, scenery and machinery, all on mules and donkeys: the singers rehearsing an opera, the principal tragedian riding on an ass, and the buffo most serious, looking as grave as night, with a cigar, and in greater agitation than all the rest. The women were in side-saddles like sedans, and there were whole panniers of children. Some of the actresses were chanting an ave, while, in more than one instance, their waists were encircled by the brawny arm of a more robust devotee. All this irresistibly reminded me of Cervantes.

Night waned, and, instead of meeting robbers, we discovered that we had only lost our way. At length we stumbled upon some peasants sleeping in the field amid the harvest, who told us that it was utterly impossible to regain our road, and so, our steeds and ourselves being equally wearied, we dismounted and turned our saddles into pillows.

I was roused, after a couple of hours' sound slumber, by the rosario, a singing procession, in which the peasantry congregate to their labours. It is most effective, full of noble chants, and melodious responses, that break upon the still fresh air and your

freshier feelings, in a manner truly magical. This is the country for a national novelist. The out-door life of the natives induces a variety of most picturesque manners, while their semi-civilisation makes each district retain, with barbarous jealousy, its peculiar customs.

I heard a shot at no great distance. It was repeated. To horse, to horse! I roused Lausanne and Tita. It struck me immediately that shots were interchanged. We galloped in the direction of the sound, followed by several peasants, and firing our pistols. Two or three runaway soldiers met us. "Carraho! Scoundrels turn back!" we cried. In a few minutes we were in sight of the combat. It was a most unequal one, and nearly finished. A robber had hold of the arm of the great lady of Madrid, who was dismounted, and seated on a bank. Her husband was leaning on his sword, and evidently agreeing to a capitulation. The servant seemed still disposed to fight. Two or three wounded men were lying on the field, soldiers, and mules, and muleteers, running about in all directions.

Tita, who was an admirable shot, fired the moment he was in reach, and brought down his man. I ran up to the lady, but not in time to despatch her assailant, who fled. The robbers, surprised, disorderly, and plundering, made no fight, and we permitted them to retreat with some severe loss.

In the midst of exclamations and confusion, Lausanne produced order. The infantry rallied, the mules re-assembled, the baggage was again arranged. The travellers were the Marquis and Marchioness of Santiago, who were about to pay a visit to their relative, the Governor of Malaga. I remained with them until we reached Granada, when the most dangerous portion of this journey was completed, and I parted from these charming persons with a promise to visit them on my arrival at their place of destination.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE is not a more beautiful and solemn temple in the world than the great Cathedral of Seville. When you enter from the glare of a Spanish sky, so deep is the staining of the glass, and so small and few the windows, that, for a moment, you feel in darkness. Gradually, the vast design of the Gothic artist unfolds itself to your vision: gradually rises up before you the profuse sumptuousness of the high altar, with its tall images, and velvet and

gold hangings, its gigantic railings of brass and massy candlesticks of silver—all revealed by the dim and perpetual light of the sacred and costly lamps.

You steal with a subdued spirit over the marble pavement. All is still, save the hushed muttering of the gliding priests. Around you are groups of kneeling worshippers, some prostrate on the ground, some gazing upwards, with their arms crossed, in mute devotion, some beating their breasts and counting their consoling beads. Lo! the tinkling of a bell. The mighty organ bursts forth. Involuntarily you fall upon your knees, and listen to the rising chanting of the solemn choir. A procession moves from an adjoining chapel. A band of crimson acolytes advance waving censers, and the melody of their distant voices responds to the deep-toned invocations of the nearer canons. There are a vast number of chapels in this Cathedral on each side of the principal nave. Most of them are adorned with masterpieces of the Spanish school. Let us approach one. The light is good, and let us gaze through this iron railing upon the picture it encloses.

I see a saint falling upon his knees, and extending his enraptured arm to receive an infant God. What mingled love, enthusiasm, devotion, reverence, blend in the countenance of the holy man! But, oh! that glowing group of seraphim, sailing and smiling in the sunny splendour of that radiant sky—who has before gazed upon such grace, such ineffable and charming beauty! And in the back-ground is an altar, whereon is a vase holding some lilies, that seem as if they were just gathered. There is but one artist who could have designed this picture; there is but one man who could have thus combined ideal grace with natural simplicity; there is but one man who could have painted that diaphanous heaven, and those fresh lilies. Inimitable Murillo!

CHAPTER V.

A SPANISH bull-fight taught me fully to comprehend the rapturous exclamation of "Panem et Circenses!" The amusement apart, there is something magnificent in the assembled thousands of an amphitheatre. It is the trait in modern manners which most effectually recalls the nobility of antique pastimes.

The poetry of a bull-fight is very much destroyed by the appearance of the cavaliers. Instead of gay, gallant knights bounding on caracoling steeds, three or four shapeless, unwieldy beings, cased in

armour of stuffed leather, and looking more like Dutch burgomasters than Spanish chivalry, enter the lists on limping ribs. The bull is, in fact, the executioner for the dogs; and an approaching bull-fight is a respite for any doomed steed throughout all Seville.

The tauridors, in their varying, fanciful, costly, and splendid dresses, compensate in a great measure for your disappointment. It is difficult to conceive a more brilliant band. There are ten or a dozen footmen, who engage the bull unarmed, distract him as he rushes at one of the cavaliers by unfolding and dashing before his eyes a glittering scarf, and saving themselves from an occasional chase by practised agility, which elicits great applause. The performance of these tauridors is, without doubt, the most graceful, the most exciting, and the most surprising portion of the entertainment.

The ample theatre is nearly full. Be careful to sit on the shady side. There is the suspense experienced at all public entertainments, only here upon a great scale. Men are gliding about selling fans and refreshments; the governor and his suite enter their box; a trumpet sounds!—all is silent.

The knights advance, poising their spears, and for a moment trying to look graceful. The tauridors walk behind them, two by two. They proceed around and across the lists; they bow to the vice-regal party, and commend themselves to the Virgin, whose portrait is suspended above.

Another trumpet! A second and a third blast! The governor throws the signal; the den opens, and the bull bounds in. That first spring is very fine. The animal stands for a moment still, staring, stupified. Gradually his hoof moves; he paws the ground; he dashes about the sand. The knights face him with their extended lances at due distance. The tauridors are still. One flies across him, and waves his scarf. The enraged bull makes at the nearest horseman; he is frustrated in his attack. Again he plants himself, lashes his tail, and rolls his eye. He makes another charge, and this time the glance of the spear does not drive him back. He gores the horse: rips up its body: the steed staggers and falls. The bull rushes at the rider, and his armour will not now preserve him; but, just as his awful horn is about to avenge his future fate, a skilful tauridor skims before him, and flaps his nostrils with his scarf. He flies after his new assailant, and immediately finds another. Now you are delighted by all the evolutions of this consummate band; occasionally they can save themselves only by leaping the barrier. The knight, in the meantime, rises, escapes, and mounts another steed.

The bull now makes a rush at another horseman; the horse dexterously veers aside. The bull rushes on, but the knight

wounds him severely in the flank with his lance. The tauridors now appear, armed with darts. They rush with extraordinary swiftness and dexterity at the infuriated animal, plant their galling weapons in different parts of his body, and scud away. To some of their darts are affixed fireworks, which ignite by the pressure of the stab. The animal is then as bewildered as infuriate; the amphitheatre echoes to his roaring, and witnesses the greatest efforts of his rage. He flies at all, staggering and streaming with blood; at length, breathless and exhausted, he stands at bay, his black, swollen tongue hanging out, and his mouth covered with foam.

'Tis horrible! Throughout, a stranger's feelings are for the bull, although this even the fairest Spaniard cannot comprehend. As it is now evident that the noble victim can only amuse them by his death, there is a universal cry for the matador; and the matador, gaily dressed, appears amid a loud cheer. The matador is a great artist. Strong nerves must combine with great quickness and great experience to form an accomplished matador. It is a rare character, highly prized; their fame exists after their death, and different cities pride themselves on producing or possessing the eminent.

The matador plants himself before the bull, and shakes a red cloak suspended over a drawn sword. This last insult excites the lingering energy of the dying hero. He makes a violent charge: the mantle falls over his face, the sword enters his spine, and he falls amid thundering shouts. The death is instantaneous, without a struggle and without a groan. A car, decorated with flowers and ribbons, and drawn by oxen, now appears, and bears off the body in triumph.

I have seen eighteen horses killed in a bull-fight, and eight bulls; but the sport is not always in proportion to the slaughter. Sometimes the bull is a craven, and then, if, after recourse has been had to every mode of excitement, he will not charge, he is kicked out of the arena amid the jeers and hisses of the audience. Every act of skill on the part of the tauridors elicits applause; nor do the spectators hesitate, if necessary, to mark their temper by a contrary method. On the whole, it is a magnificent but barbarous spectacle; and, however disgusting the principal object, the accessories of the entertainment are so brilliant and interesting that, whatever may be their abstract disapprobation, those who have witnessed a Spanish bull-fight will not be surprised at the passionate attachment of the Spanish people to their national pastime.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE is a calm voluptuousness about Spanish life that wonderfully accorded with the disposition in which I then found myself; so that, had my intellect been at command, I do not know any land where I would more willingly have indulged it. The imagination in such a country is ever at work, and beauty and grace are not scared away by those sounds and sights—those constant cares and changing feelings that are the proud possession of lands which consider themselves more blessed.

You rise early, and should breakfast lightly, although a table covered with all fruits renders that rather difficult to those who have a passion for the most delightful productions of nature, and would willingly linger over a medley of grape, and melon, and gourd, and prickly pear. In the morning you never quit the house; and these are hours which might be delightfully employed, under the inspiration of a climate which is itself poetry; for it sheds over everything a golden hue which does not exist in the illuminated objects themselves. I could then indulge only in a calm reverie, for I found the least exertion of mind instantly aggravate all my symptoms. To exist, and to feel existence more tolerable—to observe and to remember to record a thought that suddenly starts up, or to catch a new image which glances over the surface of the mind—this was still left me. But the moment that I attempted to meditate or combine, to ascertain a question that was doubtful, or in any way to call the higher powers of intellect into play, that moment I felt myself a lost man; my brain seemed to palpitate with frenzy; an indescribable feeling of idiocy came over me, and for hours I was plunged in a state of the darkest despair. When the curse had subsided to its usual dull degree of horror, my sanguine temper called me again to life and hope. My general health had never been better, and this supported me under the hardships of Spanish travelling. I never for a moment gave way to my real feelings, unless under a paroxysm, and then I fled to solitude. But I resolved to pursue this life only for a year, and if at the end of that period I found no relief, the convent and the cloister should at least afford me repose.

But 'tis three o'clock, and at this time we should be at dinner. The Spanish kitchen is not much to my taste, being rich and rather gross; and yet, for a pleasant as well as a picturesque dish, commend me to an olla podrida! After dinner comes the famed siesta. I generally slept for two hours. I think this practice conducive to

health in hot climes; the aged, however, are apt to carry it to excess. By the time you have risen and made your toilet, it is the hour to steal forth, and call upon any agreeable family whose *ter-tulla* you may choose to honour, which you do, after the first time, uninvited, and with them you take your chocolate. This is often in the air, under the colonnade of the patio, or interior quadrangle of the mansion. Here you while away the time with music and easy talk, until it is cool enough for the Alameda, or public promenade. At Cadiz and Malaga, and even at Seville, up the Guadalquivir, you are sure of a delightful breeze from the water. The sea-breeze comes like a spirit; the effect is quite magical. As you are lolling in listless languor in the hot and perfumed air, an invisible guest comes dancing into the party, and touches all with an enchanting wand. All start—all smile. It has come; it is the sea-breeze. There is much discussion whether it be as strong as the night before or whether weaker. The ladies furl their fans and seize their mantillas; the cavaliers stretch their legs and give signs of life. All arise. You offer your arm to Dolores or Catalina, and in ten minutes you are on the Alameda. What a change! All is now life and animation. Such bowing—such kissing—such fluttering of fans—such gentle criticisms of gentle friends! But the fan is the most wonderful part of the whole scene. A Spanish lady, with her fan, might shame the tactics of a troop of horse. Now she unfurls it with the slow pomp and conscious elegance of the bird of Juno; now she flutters it with all the languor of a listless beauty, now with all the liveliness of a vivacious one. Now, in the midst of a very tornado, she closes it with a whirr, which makes you start. In the midst of your confusion Dolores taps you on your elbow; you turn round to listen, and Catalina pokes you in your side. Magical instrument! In this land it speaks a particular language, and gallantry requires no other mode to express its most subtle conceits or its most unreasonable demands than this delicate machine. Yet we should remember that here, as in the north, it is not confined to the delightful sex. The cavalier also has his fan; and, that the habit may not be considered an indication of effeminacy, learn that in this scorching clime the soldier will not mount guard without this solace.

But night wears on. We seat ourselves, we take a final, a fanciful refreshment, which also, like the confectionery of Venice, I have since discovered to be oriental. Again we stroll. Midnight clears the public walk, but few Spanish families retire until a much later hour. A solitary bachelor, like myself, still wanders, lingering where the dancers softly move in the warm moonlight, and indicate, by the grace of their eager gestures and the fulness of their languid eyes, the fierceness of their passion. At length the castanet is

silent, the tinkling of the last guitar dies away, and the Cathedral clock breaks up your reverie. You, too, seek your couch, and amid a sweet flow of loveliness, and light, and music, and fresh air, thus dies a day in Spain!

CHAPTER VII.

THE Spanish women are very interesting. What we associate with the idea of female beauty is not perhaps very common in this country. There are seldom those seraphic countenances which strike you dumb, or blind; but faces in abundance, which will never pass without commanding admiration. Their charms consist in their sensibility. Each incident, every person, every word, touches the fancy of a Spanish lady, and her expressive features are constantly confuting the creed of the Moslemim. But there is nothing quick, harsh, or forced about her. She is extremely unaffected, and not at all French. Her eyes gleam rather than sparkle; she speaks with vivacity, but in sweet tones, and there is in all her carriage, particularly when she walks, a certain dignified grace, which never deserts her, and which is very remarkable.

The general female dress in Spain is of black silk, a *basquina*, and a black silk shawl, a *mantilla*, with which they usually envelop their heads. As they walk along in this costume in an evening, with their soft dark eyes dangerously conspicuous, you willingly believe in their universal charms. They are remarkable for the beauty of their hair. Of this they are very proud—and indeed its luxuriance is equalled only by the attention which they lavish on its culture. I have seen a young girl of fourteen, whose hair reached her feet, and was as glossy as the curl of a Contessa. All day long even the lowest order are brushing, curling, and arranging it. A fruit-woman has her hair dressed with as much care as the Duchess of Ossuna. In the summer they do not wear their mantilla over their heads, but show their combs, which are of very great size. The fashion of these combs varies constantly. Every two or three months you may observe a new form. It is the part of the costume of which a Spanish woman is most proud. The moment that a new comb appears, even a servant wench will run to the melter's with her old one, and thus, at the cost of a dollar or two, appear the next holiday in the newest style. These combs are worn at the back of the head. They are of tortoiseshell, and with the very fashionable they are white. I sat next to a lady of high

distinction at a bull-fight at Seville. She was the daughter-in-law of the captain-general of the province, and the most beautiful Spaniard I ever met with. Her comb was white, and she wore a mantilla of blonde—without doubt extremely valuable, for it was very dirty. The effect, however, was charming. Her hair was glossy black, her eyes like an antelope's, and all her other features deliciously soft. She was further adorned, which is rare in Spain, with a rosy cheek, for in Spain our heroines are rather sallow. But they counteract this slight defect by never appearing until twilight, which calls them from their bowers, fresh, though languid, from the late siesta.

The only fault of the Spanish beauty is, that she too soon indulges in the magnificence of *embonpoint*. There are, however, many exceptions. At seventeen, a Spanish beauty is poetical. Tall, lithe, and clear, and graceful as a jennet, who can withstand the summer lightning of her soft and languid glance! As she advances, if she do not lose her shape, she resembles Juno rather than Venus. Majestic she ever is; and if her feet be less twinkling than in her first bolero, look on her hand, and you'll forgive them all.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT Malaga, I again met the Santiagos, and, through their medium, became acquainted with a young French nobleman, who had served in the expedition against Algiers, and retired from the army in consequence of the recent revolution in his native country. The rapturous tone in which he spoke of the delights of oriental life, and of his intention to settle permanently in Egypt, or some other part of the Ottoman Empire, excited in me a great desire to visit those countries, for which my residence in a Grecian isle had somewhat prepared me. And on inquiry at the quay, finding that there was a vessel then in harbour, bound for the Ionian Isles, and about to sail, I secured our passage, and in a few days quitted the Iberian Peninsula.

CHAPTER IX.

IN sight of the ancient Coreyra, I could not forget that the island I beheld had given rise to one of the longest, most celebrated, and most fatal of ancient wars. The immortal struggle of the Peloponnesus was precipitated, if not occasioned, by a feeling of colonial jealousy. There is a great difference between ancient and modern colonies. A modern colony is a commercial enterprise, an ancient colony was a political settlement. In the emigration of our citizens, hitherto, we have merely sought the means of acquiring wealth; the ancients, when their brethren quitted their native shores, wept and sacrificed, and were reconciled to the loss of their fellow-citizens solely by the constraint of stern necessity, and the hope that they were about to find easier subsistence, and to lead a more cheerful and commodious life. I believe that a great revolution is at hand in our system of colonisation, and that Europe will soon recur to the principles of the ancient polity.

Old Coreyra is now the modern Corfu; a lovely isle, with all that you hope to meet with in a Grecian sea—gleamy waters, woody bays, the cypress, the olive, and the vine, a clear sky and a warm sun. I learnt here that a civil war raged in Albania and the neighbouring provinces of European Turkey; and, in spite of all advice, I determined, instead of advancing into Greece, to attempt to penetrate to the Turkish camp, and witness, if possible, a campaign. With these views, I engaged a small vessel to carry me to Prevesa.

CHAPTER X.

I WAS now in the Ambracian Gulf—those famous waters where the soft Triumvir gained greater glory by defeat than attends the victory of harsher warriors. The site is not unworthy of the beauty of Cleopatra. From the sinuosity of the land, this gulf appears like a vast lake, walled in on all sides by mountains more or less distant. The dying glory of a Grecian eve bathed with warm light a thousand promontories and gentle bays, and infinite undulations of purple outline. Before me was Olympus, whose austere peak yet glittered in the sun; a bend of the shore concealed from me the islands of Ulysses and of Sappho.

As I gazed upon this scene, I thought almost with disgust of the savage splendour and turbulent existence in which, perhaps, I was about to mingle. I recurred to the feelings in the indulgence of which I could alone find felicity, and from which an inexorable destiny seemed resolved to shut me out.

Hark! the clang of the barbaric horn, and the wild clash of the cymbal! A body of Turkish infantry marched along the shore. I landed, and heard for the first time of the massacre of the principal rebel Beys at Monastir, at a banquet given by the Grand Vizir, on pretence of arranging all differences. My host, a Frank experienced in the Turkish character, checked me, as I poured forth my indignation at this savage treachery. "Live a little longer in these countries before you hazard an opinion as to their conduct. Do you indeed think that the rebel Beys of Albania were so simple as to place the slightest trust in the Vizir's pledge? The practice of politics in the East may be defined by one word—dissimulation. The most wary dissembler is the consummate statesman. The Albanian chiefs went up to the divan in full array, and accompanied by a select body of their best troops. They resolved to overawe the Vizir; perhaps they even meditated, with regard to him, the very stroke which he put in execution against themselves. He was the most skilful dissembler—that is all. His manner threw them off their guard. With their troops bivouacking in the court-yard, they did not calculate that his highness could contrive to massacre the troops by an ambush, and would dare, at the same moment, to attack the leaders by their very attendants at the banquet. There is no feeling of indignation in the country at the treachery of the conqueror, though a very strong sentiment of rage, and mortification, and revenge."

I learnt that the Grand Vizir had rejoined the main army, and was supposed to have advanced to Yanina, the capital; that, in the meantime, the country between this city and the coast was overrun with prowling bands, the remnants of the rebel army, who, infuriate and flying, massacred, burnt, and destroyed all persons and all property. This was an agreeable prospect. My friend dissuaded me from my plans; but, as I was unwilling to relinquish them, he recommended me to sail up to Salora, and thence journey to Arta, where I might seek assistance from Kalio Bey, a Moslem chief, one of the most powerful and wealthy of the Albanian nobles, and ever faithful to the Porte.

To Salora I consequently repaired, and the next day succeeded in reaching Arta: a town once as beautiful as its site, and famous for its gardens, but now a mass of ruins. The whole place was razed to the ground, the minaret of the principal mosque alone untouched; and I shall never forget the effect of the Muezzin, with

his rich, and solemn, and sonorous voice, calling us to adore God in the midst of all this human havoc.

I found the Bey of Arta keeping his state, which, notwithstanding the surrounding desolation, was not contemptible, in a tenement which was not much better than a large shed. He was a very handsome, stately man, grave but not dull, and remarkably mild and bland in his manner. His polished courtesy might perhaps be ascribed to his recent imprisonment in Russia, where he was treated with so much consideration that he mentioned it to me. I had lived in such complete solitude in Candia, and had there been so absorbed by passion, that I really was much less acquainted with Turkish manners than I ought to have been. I must confess that it was with some awe that, for the first time in my life, I entered the divan of a great Turk, and found myself sitting cross-legged on the right hand of a Bey, smoking an amber-mouthed chibouque, sipping coffee, and paying him compliments through an interpreter.

There were several guests in the room, chiefly his officers. They were, as the Albanians in general, finely shaped men, with expressive countenances and spare forms. Their picturesque dress is celebrated; though, to view it with full effect, it should be seen upon an Albanian. The long hair, and the small cap, the crimson velvet vest and jacket, embroidered and embossed with golden patterns of the most elegant and flowing forms, the white and ample kilt, the ornamented buskins, and the belt full of silver-sheathed arms—it is difficult to find humanity in better plight.

There was a considerable appearance of affairs, and of patriarchal solicitude in the divan of Kalio Bey. It is possible that it was not always as busy, and that he was not uninfluenced by the pardonable vanity of impressing a stranger with his importance and beneficence. Many persons entered; and, casting off their slippers at the door, advanced and parleyed. To some was given money—to all directions; and the worthy bey doled out his piastres and his instructions with equal solemnity. At length I succeeded in calling my host's attention to the purport of my visit, and he readily granted me an escort of twenty of his Albanians. He was even careful that they should be picked men; and, calculating that I might reach the capital in two days, he drew his writing materials from his belt, and gave me a letter to a Turkish bimbashée, or colonel, who was posted with his force in the mountains I was about to pass, and under the only roof which probably remained between Arta and Yanina. He pressed me to remain his guest—though there was little, he confessed, to interest me; but I was anxious to advance, and so, after many thanks, I parted from the kind Kalio Bey.

CHAPTER XI.

By day-break we departed, and journeyed for many hours over a wild range of the ancient Pindus, stopping only once for a short rest at a beautiful fountain of marble. Here we all dismounted and lighted a fire, boiled the coffee, and smoked our pipes. There were many fine groups; but little Spiro was not so much delighted as I expected, at finding himself once more among his countrymen.

An hour before sunset we found ourselves at a vast but dilapidated khan, as big as a Gothic castle, situate on a high range, and built, for the accommodation of travellers from the capital to the coast, by the great Ali Pacha, when his long and unmolested reign permitted that sagacious ruler to develop, in a country which combines the excellencies of Western Asia and Southern Europe, some of the intended purposes of a beneficent Nature. This khan had now been converted into a military post; and here we found the Turkish commander, to whom Kalio Bey had given me a letter. He was a young man of elegant and pleasing exterior, but unluckily could not understand a word of Greek, and we had no interpreter. What was to be done? Proceed we could not, for there was not an inhabited place before Yanina; and here was I sitting before sunset on the same divan with my host, who had entered the place to receive me, and would not leave the room while I was there, without the power of communicating an idea. I was in despair, and also very hungry, and could not, therefore, in the course of an hour or two, plead fatigue as an excuse for sleep; for I was ravenous, and anxious to know what prospect of food existed in this wild and desolate mansion. So we smoked. It is a great resource. But this wore out; and it was so ludicrous, smoking and looking at each other, and dying to talk, and then exchanging pipes by way of compliment, and then pressing our hands to our hearts by way of thanks. At last it occurred to me that I had some brandy, and that I would offer my host a glass, which might serve as a hint for what should follow so vehement a schnaps. Mashallah! the effect was, indeed, miraculous. My mild friend smacked his lips, and instantly asked for another cup. We drank it in coffee-cups. A bottle of brandy was despatched in quicker time and fairer proportions than had ever solemnised the decease of the same portion of Burgundy. We were extremely gay. The bimbashee ordered some dried figs, talking all the time, and indulging in graceful pantomime, examining my pistols, inquiring about percussion locks, which greatly surprised him, handing his

own, more ornamented although less effective, weapons for my inspection; and finally making out Greek enough to misunderstand most ridiculously every observation communicated. But all was taken in good part, and I never met with such a jolly fellow.

In the meantime I became painfully ravenous; for the dry, round, unsugary fig of Albania is a great whetter. At last I asked for bread. The bimbashée gravely bowed, and said, "Leave it to me, take no thought," and nothing more occurred. I prepared myself for hungry dreams, when, to my great astonishment and delight, a capital supper was brought in, accompanied to my equal horror by wine. We ate with our fingers. It was the first time I had performed such an operation. You soon get used to it, and dash, but in turn, at the choice morsels with perfect coolness. One with a basin and ewer is in attendance, and the whole process is by no means so terrible as it would at first appear to European habits. For drinking—we really drank with a rapidity which, with me, was unprecedented: the wine was not bad; but had it been poison, the forbidden juice was such a compliment from a Moslem that I must quaff it all. We quaffed it in rivers. The bimbashée called for brandy. Unfortunately there was another bottle. We drank it all. The room turned round; the wild attendants, who sat at our feet, seemed dancing in strange whirls; the bimbashée shook hands with me—he shouted Italian, I Turkish. "Buono, buono," he had caught up—"Pecche, pecche," was my rejoinder, which, let me inform the reader, although I do not even now know much more, is very good Turkish. He shouted; he would shake hands again. I remember no more.

In the middle of the night I awoke. I found myself sleeping on the divan, rolled up in its sacred carpet. The bimbashée had wisely reeled to the fire. The thirst I felt was like that of Dives. All were sleeping except two, who kept up during the night the great wood fire. I rose, lightly stepping over my sleeping companions, and the shining arms which here and there informed me that the dark mass wrapped up in a capote was a human being. I found Abraham's bosom in a flagon of water. I think I must have drunk a gallon at a draught. I looked at the wood fire, and thought of the blazing blocks in the hall of Jonsterna; asked myself whether I were indeed in the mountain fastness of a Turkish chief; and, shrugging my shoulders, went to sleep, and woke without a headache.

CHAPTER XII.

I PARTED from my jovial host the next morning very cordially, and gave him my pipe, as a memorial of our having got tipsy together.

After crossing one more range of steep mountains we descended into a vast plain, over which we journeyed for some hours, the country presenting the same mournful aspect which I had too long observed: villages in ruins, and perfectly desolate—khans deserted, and fortresses razed to the ground—olive woods burnt up, and fruit trees cut down. So complete had been the work of destruction, that I often unexpectedly found my horse stumbling amid the foundations of a village and what at first appeared the dry bed of a torrent often turned out to be the backbone of the skeleton of a ravaged town. At the end of the plain, immediately backed by very lofty mountains, and jutting into the beautiful lake that bears its name, we suddenly came upon the city of Yanina;—suddenly, for a long tract of gradually rising ground had hitherto concealed it from our sight. At the distance from which I first beheld it, this city, once, if not the largest, one of the most thriving and brilliant in the Turkish dominions, was still imposing; but when I entered, I soon found that all preceding desolation had been only preparative to the vast scene of destruction now before me. We proceeded through a street winding in its course, but of very great length. Ruined houses, mosques with their tower only standing, streets utterly razed—these are nothing. We met with great patches of ruin a mile square, as if an army of locusts had had the power of desolating the works of man, as well as those of God. The great heart of the city was a sea of ruins—arches and pillars, isolated and shattered, still here and there jutting forth, breaking the uniformity of the annihilation, and turning the horrible into the picturesque. The great bazaar, itself a little town, had been burnt down only a few days before my arrival, by an infuriate band of Albanian warriors, who heard of the destruction of their chiefs by the Grand Vizir. They revenged themselves on tyranny by destroying civilisation.

But while the city itself presented this mournful appearance, its other characteristics were anything but sad. At this moment a swarming population, arrayed in every possible and fanciful costume, buzzed and bustled in all directions. As I passed on, and myself of course not unobserved, where a Frank had not penetrated for nine years, a thousand objects attracted my restless

attention and roving eye. Everything was so strange and splendid, that for a moment I forgot that this was an extraordinary scene even for the East, and gave up my fancy to a full credulity in the now almost obsolete magnificence of oriental life. I longed to write an Eastern tale. Military chieftains, clothed in brilliant colours and sumptuous furs, and attended by a cortege of officers equally splendid, continually passed us. Now, for the first time, a dervish saluted me: and now a delhi, with his high cap, reined in his desperate steed, as the suite of some pacha blocked up some turning of the street. It seemed to me that my first day in a Turkish city brought before me all the popular characteristics of which I had read, and which I expected occasionally to observe during a prolonged residence. I remember, as I rode on this day, I observed a Turkish scheik, in his entirely green vestments; a scribe, with his writing materials in his girdle; an ambulatory physician and his boy. I gazed about me with a mingled feeling of delight and wonder.

Suddenly a strange, wild, unearthly drum is heard, and at the end of the street a huge camel, with a slave sitting cross-legged on its neck, and beating a huge kettledrum, appears, and is the first of an apparently interminable procession of his Arabian brethren. The camels were very large; they moved slowly, and were many in number. There were not fewer than one hundred moving on one by one. To me, who had till then never seen a caravan, it was a novel and impressive spectacle. All immediately hustled out of the way of the procession, and seemed to shrink under the sound of the wild drum. The camels bore corn for the Vizir's troops encamped without the walls.

At length I reached the house of a Greek physician, to whom I carried letters. My escort repaired to the quarters of their chieftain's son, who was in the city in attendance on the Grand Vizir, and for myself I was glad enough once more to stretch my wearied limbs under a Christian roof.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE next day I signified my arrival to the Kehaya Bey of his highness, and delivered, according to custom, a letter, with which I had been kindly provided by an eminent foreign functionary. The ensuing morning was fixed for my audience. I repaired at the appointed hour to the celebrated fortress palace of Ali Pacha, which,

although greatly battered by successive sieges, is still habitable, and still affords a very fair idea of its pristine magnificence. Having passed through the gates of the fortress, I found myself in a number of small dingy streets, like those in the liberties of a royal castle. These were all full of life, stirring and excited. At length I reached a grand square, in which, on an ascent, stands the palace. I was hurried through courts and corridors, full of guards, and pages, and attendant chiefs, and, in short, every variety of Turkish population: for among the Orientals all depends upon one brain; and we, with our subdivisions of duty, and intelligent and responsible deputies, can form no idea of the labour of a Turkish premier. At length I came to a vast irregular apartment, serving as the immediate antechamber of the hall of audience. This was the finest thing of the kind I had ever yet seen. I had never mingled in so picturesque an assembly. Conceive a chamber of very great dimensions, full of the choicest groups of an oriental population, each individual waiting by appointment for an audience, and probably about to wait for ever. It was a sea of turbans, and crimson shawls, and golden scarfs, and ornamented arms. I marked with curiosity the haughty Turk, stroking his beard and waving his beads; the proud Albanian, strutting with his tarragan, or cloak, dependent on one shoulder, and touching, with impatient fingers, his silver-sheathed arms; the olive-visaged Asiatic, with his enormous turban and flowing robes, gazing, half with wonder and half with contempt, at some scarlet colonel of the newly-disciplined troops, in his gorgeous but awkward imitation of Frank uniforms; the Greek still servile, though no more a slave; the Nubian eunuch, and the Georgian page.

In this chamber, attended by the drogueman, who presented me, I remained about ten minutes—too short a time. I never thought I could have lived to wish to kick my heels in a ministerial antechamber. Suddenly I was summoned to the awful presence of the pillar of the Turkish Empire, the man who has the reputation of being the mainspring of the new system of regeneration, the renowned Redschid, an approved warrior, a consummate politician, unrivalled as a dissembler in a country where dissimulation is the principal portion of moral culture. The hall was vast, entirely covered with gilding and arabesques, inlaid with tortoiseshell and mother-of-pearl. Here I beheld, squatted in a corner of the large divan, a little, ferocious-looking, shrivelled, care-worn man, plainly dressed, with a brow covered with wrinkles, and a countenance clouded with anxiety and thought. I entered the shed-like divan of the kind and comparatively insignificant Kalio Bey with a feeling of awe; I seated myself on the divan of the Grand Vizir of the Ottoman Empire, who, as my attendant informed me, had destroyed

in the course of the last three months, *not* in war, "upwards of four thousand of my acquaintance," with the self-possession of a morning visit. At a distance from us, in a group on his left hand, were his secretary, and his immediate suite. The end of the saloon was lined with *tchawooshes*, or lackeys in waiting, in crimson dresses, with long silver canes.

Some compliments passed between us. I congratulated his highness on the pacification of Albania; and he rejoined that the peace of the world was his only object, and the happiness of his fellow-creatures his only wish. Pipes and coffee were brought, and then his highness waved his hand, and in an instant the chamber was cleared.

He then told me that he had read the letter; that the writer was one whom he much loved, and that I should join the army, although of course I was aware that, as a Frank, I could hold no command. I told him that such was not my desire, but that, as I intended to proceed to Stamboul, it would be gratifying to me to feel that I had co-operated, however humbly, in the cause of a sovereign whom I greatly admired. A Tartar now arrived with despatches, and I rose to retire, for I could perceive that the Vizir was overwhelmed with business, and, although courteous, moody and anxious. He did not press me to remain, but desired that I would go and visit his son, Amin Pacha—to whose care he consigned me.

Amin, Pacha of Yanina, was a youth of eighteen, but apparently ten years older. He was the reverse of his father: incapable in affairs, refined in manners, plunged in debauchery, and magnificent in dress. I found him surrounded by his favourites and flatterers, reclining on his divan in a fanciful hussar uniform of blue cloth, covered with gold and diamonds, and worn under a Damascus pelisse of thick maroon silk, lined with white fox furs. I have seldom met with a man of more easy address and more polished breeding. He paid many compliments to the Franks, and expressed his wish to make a visit to the English at Corfu. As I was dressed in regimentals, he offered to show me his collection of military costumes, which had been made for him principally at Vienna. He also ordered one of his attendants to bring his manuscript book of cavalry tactics, which were unfortunately all explained to me. I mention these slight traits, to show how eagerly the modern Turks pique themselves on European civilisation. After smoking and eating sweetmeats—a custom indicative of friendship—he proposed that I should accompany him to the camp, where he was about to review a division of the forces. I assented. We descended together, and I found a boy, with a barb magnificently caparisoned, waiting at the portal: of both these Amin

begged my acceptance. Mounting, we proceeded to the camp; nor do I think that the cortege of the young pacha consisted of fewer than a hundred persons, who were all officers, either of his household or of the cavalry regiment which he commanded.

CHAPTER XIV.

I GLADLY believe, that the increased efficiency of the Turkish troops compensates for their shorn splendour and sorry appearance. A shaven head, covered with a tight red cloth cap, a small blue jacket of coarse cloth, huge trowsers of the same material, puckered out to the very stretch of art, yet sitting tight to the knee and calf, mean accoutrements, and a pair of dingy slippers—behold the successor of the superb janissary! Yet they perform their manœuvres with precision, and have struggled even with the Russian infantry with success. The officer makes a better appearance. His dress, although of the same fashion, is of scarlet, and of the finest cloth. It is richly embroidered, and the colonel wears upon his breast a star and crescent of diamonds. At the camp of Yanina, however, I witnessed a charge of Delhis with their scimitars, and a more effective cavalry I never wish to lead.

We returned to the city, and I found that apartments were allotted to me in the palace, whither Lausanne and the rest had already repaired. In the evening the Vizir sent to me the first singer in Turkey, with several musicians. The singer chanted for an hour, in a wild, piercing voice, devoid both of harmony and melody, a triumphant ballad on the recent massacre of Veli Bey and his rebel coadjutors. Nothing appears to me more frightful than Turkish music; yet it produces on those who are accustomed to it a very great effect, and my room was filled with strangers, who hastened to listen to the enchanting and exciting strain. The Turkish music is peculiar, and different from that of other Eastern nations. I have seldom listened to more simple and affecting melodies than those with which the boatmen on the Nile are wont to soothe their labours.

The dancing girls followed, and were more amusing; but I had not then seen the Almei of Egypt.

A week flew away at Yanina in receiving and returning visits from pachas, agas, and selictars, in smoking pipes, sipping coffee, and tasting sweetmeats. Each day the Vizir, or his son, sent me provisions ready prepared from their table, and indicated by some

attention their considerate kindness. There is no character in the world higher bred than a Turk of rank. Some of these men, too, I found extremely intelligent, deeply interested in the political amelioration of their country, and warm admirers of Peter the Great. I remember with pleasure the agreeable hours I have spent in the society of Mehmet Aga, selictar of the Pacha of Lepanto—a warrior to whom the obstinate resistance of Varna is mainly to be attributed—and a remarkably enlightened man. Yet even he could not emancipate himself from their fatalism. For I remember, when once conversing with him on the equipments of the cavalry, a subject in which he was very much interested, I suggested to him the propriety of a corps of cuirassiers. “A cuirass cannot stop the ball that bears your fate,” he replied, shrugging up his shoulders and exclaiming, “Mashallah!”

While I was leading this novel and agreeable life, news arrived that the Pacha of Scutari, who had placed himself at the head of the insurgent janissaries, and was the champion of the old party, had entered Albania at the head of sixty thousand men to avenge the massacre of the beys.

CHAPTER XV.

THE Grand Vizir set off the same night with ten thousand men, reached Ochrida by forced marches, attacked and routed a division of the rebel troops before they supposed him to be apprised of their movements, and again encamped at Monastir, sending urgent commands to Yanina for his son to advance with the rest of the army. We met his Tartar on our march, and the divisions soon joined. After a day's rest, we advanced, and entered the Pachalik of Scutari.

The enemy, to our surprise, avoided an engagement. The fierce undisciplined warriors were frightened at our bayonets. They destroyed all before us, and hung with their vigilant cavalry on our exhausted rear. We had advanced on one side to Scutari; on the other, we had penetrated into Romelia. We carried everything before us, but we were in want of supplies, our soldiers were without food, and a skilful general and disciplined troops might have cut off all our communications.

Suddenly, the order was given to retreat. We retreated slowly and in excellent order. Two regiments of the newly-organised cavalry, with whom I had the honour to act, covered the rear, and were engaged in almost constant skirmishing with the enemy.

This skirmishing is very exciting. We concentrated, and again encamped at Ochrida.

We were in hopes of now drawing the enemy into an engagement, but he was wary. In this situation, the Vizir directed that in the night a powerful division under the command of Mehemet, Pacha of Lepanto—he who stabbed Ali Pacha—should fall back to Monastir with the artillery, and take up a position in the mountains. The ensuing night, his highness, after having previously spiked some useless guns, scattered about some tents and baggage wagons, and given a general appearance of a hurried and disorderly retreat, withdrew in the same direction. The enemy instantly pursued, rushed on, and attacked us full of confidence. We contented ourselves by protecting our rear, but still retreated, and appeared anxious to avoid an engagement. In the evening, having entered the mountain passes, and reached the post of the Pacha of Lepanto, we drew up in battle array.

It was a cloudy morning among the mountains, and some time before the mist cleared away. The enemy appeared to be in great force, filling the gorge through which we had retreated, and encamped on all the neighbouring eminences. When they perceived us, a large body instantly charged with the famous janissary shout, the terror of which I confess. I was cold, somewhat exhausted for I had scarcely tasted food for two days, and for a moment my heart sank.

They were received, to their surprise, by a well-directed discharge of artillery from our concealed batteries. They seemed checked. Our ranks opened, and a body of five thousand fresh troops instantly charged them with the bayonet. This advance was sublime, and so exciting that, what with the shouts and cannonading, I grew mad, and longed to rush forward. The enemy gave way. Their great force was in cavalry, which could not act among the mountains. They were evidently astonished and perplexed. In a few minutes they were routed. The Vizir gave orders for a general charge and pursuit, and in a few minutes I was dashing over the hills in rapid chase of all I could catch—cutting, firing, shouting, and quite persuaded that a battle was, after all, the most delightful pastime in the world.

The masses still charging, the groups demanding quarter, the single horseman bounding over the hills, the wild, scared steeds without a rider, snorting and plunging, the dense smoke clearing away, the bright arms and figures flashing ever and anon in the moving obscurity, the wild shouts, the strange and horrible spectacles, the solitary shots and shrieks now heard in the decreasing uproar, and the general feeling of energy, and peril, and triumph,—it was all wonderful, and was a glorious moment in existence.

The enemy was scattered like chaff. To rally them was impossible; and the chiefs, in despair, were foremost in flight. They offered no resistance, and the very men who, in the morning, would have been the first to attack a battery, sabre in hand, now yielded in numbers without a struggle to an individual. There was a great slaughter, a vast number of prisoners, and plunder without end. My tent was filled with rich arms, and shawls, and stuffs, and embroidered saddles. Lausanne and Tita were the next day both clothed in splendid Albanian dresses, and little Spiro plundered the dead as became a modern Greek.

I reached my tent, dismounted from my horse, and leant upon it from exhaustion. An Albanian came forward, and offered a flask of Zitza wine. I drank it at a draught, and assuredly experienced the highest sensual pleasure. I took up two Cache-mire shawls, and a gun mounted in silver, and gave them to the Albanian. Lucky is he who is courteous in the hour of plunder.

The Vizir I understood to be at Ochrida, and I repaired to that post over the field of battle. The moon had risen, and tinged with its white light all the prominent objects of the scene of destruction; groups of bodies, and now and then a pallid face, distinct and fierce; steeds, and standards, and arms, and shattered wagons. Here and there a moving light showed that the plunderer was still at his work; and, occasionally, seated on the carcass of a horse, and sometimes on the corpse of a human being, were some of the fortunate survivors, smoking with admirable coolness, as if there were not on earth such a fearful mystery as death.

I found the victorious Redschid seated on a carpet in the moonlight in a cypress grove, and surrounded by attendants, to whom he was delivering instructions and distributing rewards. He appeared as calm and grave as usual. Perceiving him thus engaged I mingled with the crowd, and stood aside, leaning on my sword; but, observing me, he beckoned to me to advance, and, pointing to his carpet, he gave me the pipe of honour from his own lips. As I seated myself by his side, I could not help viewing this extraordinary man with great interest and curiosity. A short time back, at this very place, he had perpetrated an act which would have rendered him infamous in a civilised land; the avengers meet him, as if by fate, on the very scene of his bloody treachery, and—he is victorious. What is life?

So much for the battle of Bitoglia or Monastir, a very pretty fray, although not as much talked of as Austerlitz or Waterloo, and which probably would have remained unknown to the great mass of European readers, had not a young Frank gentleman mingled, from a silly fancy, in its lively business.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE effect of the battle of Bitoglia was the complete pacification of Albania, and the temporary suppression of the conspiracies in the adjoining provinces. Had it been in the power of the Porte to reinforce at this moment its able and faithful servant, it is probable that the authority of the Sultan would have been permanently consolidated in these countries. As it is, the finest regions in Europe are still the prey of civil war, in too many instances excited by foreign powers for their miserable purposes against a prince who is only inferior to Peter the Great because he has profited by his example.

For myself, perceiving that there was no immediate prospect of active service, I determined to visit Greece, and I parted from his highness with the hope that I might congratulate him at Stamboul.

CHAPTER XVII.

A COUNTRY of promontories, and gulfs, and islands clustering in an azure sea; a country of wooded vales and purple mountains, wherein the cities are built on plains covered with olive woods, and at the base of an Acropolis, crowned with a temple or a tower. And there are quarries of white marble, and vines, and much wild honey. And wherever you move is some fair and elegant memorial of the poetic past; a lone pillar on the green and silent plain, once echoing with the triumphant shouts of sacred games, the tomb of a hero, or the fane of a god. Clear is the sky and fragrant is the air, and at all seasons the magical scenery of this land is coloured with that mellow tint, and invested with that pensive character, which in other countries we conceive to be peculiar to autumn, and which beautifully associate with the recollections of the past. Enchanting Greece!

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN the Argolic Gulf I found myself in the very heart of the Greek tragedy: Nauplia and Sparta, the pleasant Argos and the rich Mycene, the tomb of Agamemnon and the palace of Clytemnestra. The fortunes of the house of Atreus form the noblest of all legends. I believe in that Destiny before which the ancients bowed. Modern philosophy, with its superficial discoveries, has infused into the breast of man a spirit of scepticism; but I think that, ere long, science will again become imaginative, and that, as we become more profound, we may become also more credulous. Destiny is our will, and our will is our nature. The son who inherits the organisation of the father will be doomed to the same fortunes as his sire; and again the mysterious matter in which his ancestors were moulded may, in other forms, by a necessary attraction, act upon his fate. All is mystery; but he is a slave who will not struggle to penetrate the dark veil.

I quitted the Morea without regret. It is covered with Venetian memorials, no more to me a source of joy, and bringing back to my memory a country on which I no longer love to dwell. I cast anchor in a small but secure harbour; and landed. I climbed a hill, from which I looked over a vast plain, covered with olive woods, and skirted by mountains. Some isolated hills, of very picturesque form, rose in the plain at a distance from the terminating range. On one of these I beheld a magnificent temple bathed in the sunset. At the foot of the craggy steep on which it rested was a walled city of considerable dimensions, in front of which rose a Doric temple of exquisite proportion, and apparently uninjured. The violet sunset threw over this scene a colouring becoming its loveliness, and if possible increasing its refined character. Independent of all associations, it was the most beautiful spectacle that had ever passed before a vision always musing on sweet sights; yet I could not forget that it was the bright capital of my youthful dreams, the fragrant city of the Violet Crown—the fair, the sparkling, the delicate ATHENS!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE illusion vanished when I entered Athens. I found it in scarcely a less shattered condition than the towns of Albania—ruined streets, and roofless houses, and a scanty population. The women were at Egina in security; a few males remained behind to watch the fortune of war. The Acropolis had not been visited by travellers for nine years, and was open to inspection for the first time the very day I entered. It was still in the possession of the Turks, but the Greek commission had arrived to receive the keys of the fortress. The ancient remains have escaped better than we could hope. The Parthenon and the other temples on the Acropolis have necessarily suffered in the sieges, but the injury is only in the detail; the general effect is not marred, although I observed many hundred shells and cannon-balls lying about.

The Theseum has not been touched, and looks, at a short distance, as if it were just finished by Cimon. The sumptuous columns of the Olympium still rise from their stately platform, but the Choragic monument is sadly maimed, as I was assured, by English sailors and not Eastern barbarians; probably the same marine monsters who have commemorated their fatal visit to Egypt and the name of the fell craft that bore them thither, by covering the granite pillar of Pompey with gigantic characters in black paint.

The durability of the Parthenon is wonderful. As far as I could observe, had it not been for the repeated ravages of man, it might at this day have been in as perfect condition as in the age of Pericles. Abstract time it has defied. Gilt and painted, with its pictures and votive statues, it must have been one of the most brilliant creations of human genius. Yet we err if we consider this famous building as an unparalleled effort of Grecian architecture. Compared with the temples of Ionia and the Sicilian fanes—compared even with the Olympium at its feet, the Parthenon could only rank as a church with a cathedral.

In art the Greeks were the children of the Egyptians. The day may yet come when we shall do justice to the high powers of that mysterious and imaginative people. The origin of Doric and Ionic invention must be traced amid the palaces of Carnac and the temples of Luxoor. For myself, I confess I ever gaze upon the marvels of art with a feeling of despair. With horror I remember that, through some mysterious necessity, civilisation seems to have deserted the most favoured regions and the choicest intellects. The Persian whose very being is poetry, the Arab

whose subtle mind could penetrate into the very secret shrine of Nature, the Greek whose acute perceptions seemed granted only for the creation of the beautiful,—these are now unlettered slaves in barbarous lands. The arts are yielded to the flat-nosed Franks. And they toil, and study, and invent theories to account for their own incompetence. Now it is the climate, now the religion, now the government; everything but the truth, everything but the mortifying suspicion that their organisation may be different, and that they may be as distinct a race from their models as they undoubtedly are from the Kalmuck and the Negro.

CHAPTER XX.

WHATEVER may have been the faults of the ancient governments, they were in closer relation to the times, to the countries, and to the governed, than ours. The ancients invented their governments according to their wants; the moderns have adopted foreign policies, and then modelled their conduct upon this borrowed regulation. This circumstance has occasioned our manners and our customs to be so confused, and absurd, and unphilosophical. What business had we, for instance, to adopt the Roman law—a law foreign to our manners, and consequently disadvantageous? He who profoundly meditates upon the situation of Modern Europe will also discover how productive of misery has been the senseless adoption of oriental customs by northern people. Whence came that divine right of kings, which has deluged so many countries with blood?—that pastoral and Syrian law of tithes, which may yet shake the foundation of so many ancient institutions?

CHAPTER XXI.

EVEN as a child, I was struck by the absurdity of modern education. The duty of education is to give ideas. When our limited intelligence was confined to the literature of two dead languages, it was necessary to acquire those languages, in order to obtain the knowledge which they embalmed. But now each nation has its literature,

—each nation possesses, written in its own tongue, a record of all knowledge, and specimens of every modification of invention. Let education then be confined to that national literature, and we should soon perceive the beneficial effects of this revolution upon the mind of the student. Study would then be a profitable delight. I pity the poor Gothic victim of the grammar and the lexicon. The Greeks, who were masters of composition, were ignorant of all languages but their own. They concentrated their study of the genius of expression upon one tongue. To this they owe that blended simplicity and strength of style which the imitative Romans, with all their splendour, never attained.

To the few, however, who have leisure or inclination to study foreign literatures, I will not recommend to them the English, the Italian, the German, since they may rightly answer, that all these have been in great part founded upon the classic tongues, and therefore it is wise to ascend to the fountain-head; but I will ask them for what reason they would limit their experience to the immortal languages of Greece and Rome? Why not study the oriental? Surely in the pages of the Persians and the Arabs we might discover new sources of emotion, new modes of expression, new trains of ideas, new principles of invention, and new bursts of fancy.

These are a few of my meditations amid the ruins of Athens. They will disappoint those who might justly expect an ebullition of classic rapture from one who has gazed upon Marathon by moonlight and sailed upon the free waters of Salamis. I regret their disappointment, but I have arrived at an age when I can think only of the future. A mighty era, prepared by the blunders of long centuries, is at hand. Ardently I hope that the necessary change in human existence may be effected by the voice of philosophy alone: but I tremble, and I am silent. There is no bigotry so terrible as the bigotry of a country that flatters itself that it is philosophical.

CHAPTER XXII.

UNDERSTANDING that the Turkish squadron I left at Prevesa had arrived at Negropont, I passed over, and paid a visit to its commander, Halil Pacha, with whom I was acquainted. Halil informed me that all remained quiet in Albania, but that Redschid did not venture to return. He added that he himself was about to sail for Stamboul immediately, and proposed that I should accompany him.

His offer suited me, and, as the wind was fair, in a few hours we were all on board.

I had a splendid view of Sunium ; its columns against a dark cloud looked like undriven snow, and we were soon among the Cyclades. Sixteen islands were in sight, and we were now making our course in the heart of them. An archipelago by sunset is lovely : small isles of purple and gold studding the glowing waters. The wind served well through the night, but we were becalmed the next day off Mitylene. In the afternoon a fresh breeze sprang up and carried us to the Dardanelles.

We were yet, I believe, upwards of a hundred miles from Constantinople. What a road to a great city ! narrower and much longer than the strait of Gibraltar, but not with such sublime shores. Asia and Europe look more kindly on each other than Europe and her more sultry sister. I found myself the next morning becalmed off Troy : a vast, hilly, uncultivated plain ; a scanty rill, a huge tumulus, some shepherds and their flocks ; behold the kingdom of Priam, and the successors of Paris !

A signal summoned us on board ; the wind was fair and fresh. We scudded along with great swiftness, passing many towns and fortresses. Each dome, each minaret, I thought was Constantinople. At last it came ; we were in full sight. Masses of habitations, grouped on gentle acclivities, rose on all sides out of the water, part in Asia, part in Europe ; a gay and confused vision of red buildings, and dark-green cypress groves, hooded domes, and millions of minarets. As we approached the design became more obvious. The groups formed themselves into three considerable cities, intersected by arms of the sea. Down one of these, rounding the Seraglio point, our vessel held her course. We seemed to glide into the heart of the capital. The water was covered with innumerable boats, as swift as gondolas and far more gay, curiously carved and richly gilt. In all parts swarmed a showy population. The characteristic of the whole scene was brilliancy. The houses glittered, the waters sparkled, and flocks of white and sacred birds glanced in the golden air, and skimmed over the blue wave. On one side of the harbour was moored the Turkish fleet, dressed out in all their colours. Our course was ended, and we cast our anchor in the famous Golden Horn.

CHAPTER XXIII.

No picture can ever convey a just idea of Constantinople. I have seen several that are faithful, as far as they extend; but the most comprehensive can exhibit only a small portion of this extraordinary city. By land or by water, in every direction, passing up the Golden Horn to the valley of Fresh Waters, or proceeding, on the other hand, down the famous Bosphorus to Buyukdere and Terapia, to the Euxine, what infinite novelty! New kiosks, new hills, new windings, new groves of cypress, and new forests of chestnut, open on all sides.

The two most remarkable things at Constantinople are the Bosphorus and the Bazaar. Conceive the ocean a stream not broader than the Rhine, with shores presenting all the beauty and variety of that river, running between gentle slopes covered with rich woods, gardens, and summer-palaces, cemeteries, and mosques, and villages, and bounded by sublime mountains. The view of the Euxine from the heights of Terapia, just seen through the end of the Straits, is like gazing upon eternity.

The Bazaar is of a different order, but not less remarkable. I never could obtain from a Turk any estimate of the ground it covered. Several, in the habit of daily attendance, have mentioned to me that they often find themselves in divisions they have not before visited. Fancy a Parisian panorama—passage—fancy perhaps a square mile covered with these arcades, intersecting each other in all directions, and full of every product of the empire, from diamonds to dates. This will give you some idea of the Great Bazaar at Constantinople. The dealers, in every possible costume, sit cross-legged in their stalls, and dealers in the same article usually congregate together. The armourers, the grocers, the pipe-makers, the jewellers, the shawl-sellers, the librarians—all have their distinct quarter. Now you walk along a range of stalls filled with the most fanciful slippers of cloth and leather, of all colours, embroidered with gold or powdered with pearls; now you are in a street of confectionery; and now you are cheapening a Damascus sabre in the bazaar of arms, or turning over a vividly-illuminated copy of Hafiz in that last stronghold of Turkish bigotry, the quarter of the venders of the Koran. The magnificence, novelty, and variety of the goods on sale—the whole nation of shopkeepers, all in different dress—the crowds of buyers from all parts of the world—I only hint at these traits. Here every people has a characteristic costume. Turks, Greeks, Jews, and

Armenians are the staple population: the latter are numerous. The Armenians wear round and very unbecoming black caps, and flowing robes; the Jews, a black hat wreathed with a white handkerchief; the Greeks, black turbans. The Turks are fond of dress, and indulge in all combinations of costume. Of late, among the young men in the capital, it has been the fashion to discard the the huge turban and the ample robes, and they have formed an exceedingly ungraceful dress upon the Frank; but vast numbers cling to the national costume, especially the Asiatics, renowned for the prodigious height and multifarious folds of their head-gear.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HALIL PACHA paid me a visit one day at my residence on the Bosphorus, and told me that he had mentioned my name to the Sultan, who had expressed a desire to see me. As it is not etiquette for the Padishah to receive Franks, I was, of course, as sensible of the high honour as I was anxious to become acquainted with the extraordinary man who was about to confer it.

The Sultan was at this moment at a palace on the Bosphorus, not far from Tophana. Hither on the appointed day I repaired with Halil and the droguman of the Porte. We were ushered into a chamber, where a principal officer of the household received us, and where I smoked out of a pipe tipped with diamonds, and sipped coffee perfumed with roses out of cups studded with precious stones.

When we had remained here for about half an hour, Mustapha the private secretary and favourite of the Sultan, entered, and, after saluting us, desired us to follow him. We proceeded along a corridor, at the end of which stood two or three eunuchs, richly dressed, and then the door opened, and I found myself in an apartment of moderate size, painted with indifferent arabesques in fresco, and surrounded with a divan of crimson velvet and gold. Seated upon this, with his feet on the floor, his arms folded, and in an hussar dress, was the Grand Signor.

As we entered he slightly touched his heart, according to the fashion of the Orientals; and Mustapha, setting us an example, desired us to seat ourselves. I fancied, and I was afterwards assured of the correctness of my observation, that the Sultan was very much constrained, and very little at his ease. The truth is, he is totally unused to interviews with strangers; and this was for

him a more novel situation than for me. His constraint wore off as conversation proceeded. He asked a great many questions, and often laughed, turning to Mustapha with a familiar nod when my replies pleased him. He inquired much about the Albanian war. Without flattering my late commander, it was in my power to do him service. He asked me what service I had before seen, and was evidently surprised when I informed him I was only an amateur. He then made many inquiries as to the European forces, and in answering them I introduced some opinions on politics, which interested him. He asked me who I was. I told him I was the son of the Prime Minister of —, a power always friendly to the Ottoman. His eyes sparkled, and he repeated several times, "It is well—it is well;" meaning, I suppose, that he did not repent of the interview. He told me that in two years' time he should have two hundred thousand regular infantry; that, if the Russian war could have been postponed another year, he should have beat the Muscovites; that the object of the war was to crush his schemes of regeneration; that he was betrayed at Adrianople, as well as at Varna. He added that he had only done what Peter the Great had done before him, and that Peter was thwarted by unsuccessful wars, yet at last succeeded.

I, of course, expressed my conviction that his highness would be as fortunate.

The Padishah then abruptly said that all his subjects should have equal rights; that there should be no difference between Moslem and infidel; that all who contributed to the government had a right to the same protection.

Here Mustapha nodded to Halil, and we rose, and bowing quitted the presence of a really great man.

I found at the portal a fine Arabian, two Cachemire shawls, a scarlet cloak of honour, with the collar embroidered with gold and fastened with diamond clasps, a sabre, and two superb pipes. This was my reward for charging with the Turkish cavalry at Bitoglia.

CHAPTER XXV.

ONE of the most curious things at Constantinople is the power you have, in the Capital of the East, of placing yourself in ten minutes in a lively Frank town. Such is Pera. I passed there the winter months of December and January in very agreeable and intelligent society. My health improved, but my desire of wandering increased.

I began to think that I should now never be able to settle in life. The desire of fame did not revive. I felt no intellectual energy; I required nothing more than to be amused. And having now passed four or five months at Stamboul, and seen all its wonders, from the interior of its mosques to the dancing dervishes, I resolved to proceed. So, one cold morning in February, I crossed over to Scutari, and my wandering foot pressed the soil of Asia.

PART THE SIXTH.

CHAPTER I.

I WAS now in the great Peninsula of Asia Minor, a country admirably fortified by Nature, abounding in vast, luxuriant, and enchanting plains, from which a scanty population derive a difficult subsistence, and watered by broad rivers rolling through solitude.

As I journeyed along I could not refrain from contrasting the desolation of the present with the refinement of the past, and calling up a vision of the ancient splendour of this famous country. I beheld those glorious Greek federations that covered the provinces of the coast with their rich cultivation and brilliant cities. Who has not heard of the green and bland Ionia, and its still more fruitful, although less picturesque, sister, the rich *Æolis*? Who has not heard of the fane of Ephesus, and the Anacreontic Teios; Chios, with its rosy wine; and Cnidus, with its rosy goddess; Colophon, Priene, Phocæa, Samos, Miletos, the splendid Halicarnassus, and the sumptuous Cos—magnificent cities, abounding in genius and luxury, and all the polished refinement that ennobles life! Everywhere around, these free and famous citizens disseminated their liberty and their genius; in the savage Tauris; and on the wild shores of Pontus; on the banks of the Borysthenes, and by the waters of the rapid Tyras. The islands in their vicinity shared their splendour and their felicity; the lyric Lesbos, and Tenedos with its woods and vines, and those glorious gardens, the fortunate Cyprus, and the prolific Rhodes.

Under the empire of Rome the Peninsula of Asia enjoyed a not less eminent prosperity. The interior provinces vied in wealth and civilisation with the ancient colonies of the coast. Then the cavalry of Cappadocia and Paphlagonia were famous as the Lycian mariners, the soldiers of Pontus, and the bowmen of Armenia; then Galatia sent forth her willing and welcome tribute of corn, and the fruitful Bithynia rivalled the Pamphylian pastures, the vines of Phrygia, and the Pisidian olives. Tarsus, Ancyra, Sardis, Cæsarea, Sinope, Amisus, were the great and opulent capitals of

these flourishing provinces. Alexandria rose upon the ruins of Troy, and Nicæa and Nicomedia ranked with the most celebrated cities.

And now the tinkling bell of the armed and wandering caravan was the only indication of human existence!

It is in such scenes as these, amid the ruins of ancient splendour and the recollections of vanished empire, that philosophers have pondered on the nature of government, and have discovered, as they fancied, in the consequences of its various forms, the causes of duration or of decay, of glory or of humiliation. Freedom, says the sage, will lead to prosperity, and despotism to destruction.

Yet has this land been regulated by every form of government that the ingenuity of man has devised. The federal republic, the military empire, the oriental despotism, have in turn controlled its fortunes. The deputies of free states have here assembled in some universal temple which was the bond of union between their cities. Here has the proconsul presided at his high tribunal: and here the pacha reposes in his divan. The Pagan fane, and the Christian church, and the Turkish mosque, have here alike been erected to form the opinions of the people. The legends of Chaos and Olympus are forgotten, the sites of the seven churches cannot even be traced, and nothing is left but the revelations of the son of Abdallah—a volume, the whole object of which is to convert man into a fanatic slave.

Is there then no hope? Is it an irrevocable doom, that society shall be created only to be destroyed? When I can accept such a dogma, let me also believe that the beneficent Creator is a malignant demon. Let us meditate more deeply; let us at length discover that no society can long subsist that is based upon metaphysical absurdities.

The law that regulates man must be founded on a knowledge of his nature, or that law leads him to ruin. What is the nature of man? In every clime and in every creed we shall find a new definition.

Before me is a famous treatise on human nature, by a Professor of Königsberg. No one has more profoundly meditated on the attributes of his subject. It is evident that, in the deep study of his own intelligence, he has discovered a noble method of expounding that of others. Yet when I close his volumes, can I conceal from myself that all this time I have been studying a treatise upon the nature—not of man, but—of a German?

What then! Is the German a different animal from the Italian? Let me inquire in turn, whether you conceive the negro of the Gold Coast to be the same being as the Esquimaux, who tracks his way over the polar snows?

The most successful legislators are those who have consulted the genius of the people. But is it possible to render that which

is the occasional consequence of fine observation the certain result of scientific study?

One thing is quite certain, that the system we have pursued to attain a knowledge of man has entirely failed. Let us disembarass ourselves of that "moral philosophy" which has filled so many volumes with words. History will always remain a pleasant pastime; it never could have been a profitable study. To study man from the past is to suppose that man is ever the same animal—which I do not. Those who speculated on the career of Napoleon had ever a dog's-eared annalist to refer to. The past equally proved that he was both a Cromwell and a Washington. Prophetic Past! He turned out to be the first. But suppose he had been neither; suppose he had proved a Sylla?

Man is an animal, and his nature must be studied as that of all other animals. The almighty Creator has breathed his spirit into us; and we testify our gratitude for this choice boon by never deigning to consider what may be the nature of our intelligence. The philosopher, however, amid this darkness, will not despair. He will look forward to an age of rational laws and beneficent education. He will remember that all the truth he has attained has been by one process. He will also endeavour to become acquainted with himself by demonstration, and not by dogma.

CHAPTER II.

ONE fair spring morning, with a clear blue sky, and an ardent but not intense sun, I came in sight of the whole coast of Syria; very high and mountainous, and the loftiest ranges covered with snow.

I had sailed from Smyrna, through its lovely gulf, vaster and more beautiful than the Ambracian, found myself in a new archipelago, the Sporades; and, having visited Rhodes and Cyprus, engaged at the last island a pilot to take us to the most convenient Syrian port.

Syria is, in fact, an immense chain of mountains, extending from Asia Minor to Arabia. In the course of this great chain an infinity of branches constantly detach themselves from the parent trunk, forming on each side, either towards the desert or the sea, beautiful and fertile plains. Washed by the Levantine wave, on one side we behold the once luxurious Antioch, now a small and dingy Turkish town. The traveller can no longer wander in the voluptuous woods of Daphne. The palace and the garden pass away with the refined genius and the delicate taste that create them;

but Nature is eternal, and even yet the valley of the Orontes offers, under the glowing light of an eastern day, scenes of picturesque beauty that Switzerland cannot surpass. The hills of Laodicea, once famous for their wine, are now celebrated for producing the choicest tobacco of the East. Tripoli is a flourishing town, embosomed in wild groves of Indian figs, and famous for its fruits and silks. Advancing along the coast we reach the ancient Berytus, whose tobacco vies with Laodicea, and whose silk surpasses that of Tripoli. We arrive at all that remains of the superb Tyre; a small peninsula and a mud village. The famous Acre is still the most important place upon the coast; and Jaffa, in spite of so many wars, is yet fragrant amid its gardens and groves of lemon trees.

The towns on the coast have principally been built on the sites and ruins of the ancient cities whose names they bear. None of them have sufficient claims to the character of a capital; but on the other side of the mountains we find two of the most important of oriental cities—the populous Aleppo, and the delicious Damascus; nor must we forget Jerusalem, that city sacred in so many creeds!

In ancient remains, Syria is inferior only to Egypt. All have heard of the courts of Baalbec and the columns of Palmyra. Less known, because only recently visited—and visited with extreme danger—are the vast ruins of magnificent cities in the Arabian vicinity of the lake Asphaltites.

The climate of this country is various as its formation. In the plains is often experienced that intense heat so fatal to the European invader; yet the snow, that seldom falls upon the level ground, or falls only to vanish, rests upon the heights of Lebanon, and, in the higher lands, it is not difficult at all times to discover exactly the temperature you desire. I travelled in Syria at the commencement of the year, when the short but violent rainy season had just ceased. It is not easy to conceive a more beautiful and fruitful land. The plains were covered with that fresh green tint so rare under an Eastern sky; the orange and lemon trees were clothed both with fruit and blossom; and then, too, I first beheld the huge leaf of the banana, and tasted for the first time the delicate flavour of its unrivalled fruit. From the great extent of the country, and the consequent variation of clime, the Syrian can always command a succession, as well as a variety, of luxuries. The season of the pomegranate will commence in Antioch when it ends in Jaffa; and when you have exhausted the figs of Beyroot, you can fly to the gardens of Damascus. Under the worst government that perhaps ever oppressed its subjects, Syria still brings forth the choice productions of almost every clime; corn and cotton, maize and rice, the sugar-cane of the Antilles, and the

indigo and cochineal of Mexico. The plains of Antioch and of Palestine are covered with woods of the finest olives, the tobaccoes of the coast are unrivalled in any country; and the mountains of Lebanon are clothed with white mulberry-trees that afford the richest silks, or with vineyards that yield a wine which justly bears the name of Golden.

The inhabitants of this country are various as its productions and its mutable fortunes. The Ottoman conqueror is now the lord, and rules the posterity of the old Syrian Greeks and of the Arabs, who were themselves once predominant. In the mountains, the independent and mysterious Druses live in freedom under their own Emir; and in the ranges near Antioch we find the Ansaree tribes, who, it is whispered, yet celebrate the most singular rites of Paganism. In the deserts around Aleppo wander the pastoral Kourd and the warlike Turkoman; and from Tadmor to Gaza the whole Syrian desert is traversed by the famous Bedouin.

There is a charm in oriental life, and it is—Repose. Upon me, who had been bred in the artificial circles of corrupt civilisation, and who had so freely indulged the course of impetuous passions, this character made a very forcible impression. Wandering over those plains and deserts, and sojourning in those silent and beautiful cities, I experienced all the serenity of mind which I can conceive to be the enviable portion of the old age of a virtuous life. The memory of the wearing cares, and corroding anxieties, and vaunted excitement of European life, filled me with pain. Keenly I felt the vanity and littleness of all human plans and aspirations. Truly may I say that on the plains of Syria I parted for ever with my ambition. The calm enjoyment of existence appeared to me, as it now does, the highest attainable felicity; nor can I conceive that anything could tempt me from my solitude, and induce me once more to mingle with mankind, with whom, I fear, I have too little in common, but the strong conviction that the fortunes of my race depended on my effort, or that I could materially advance that great amelioration of their condition, in the practicability of which I devoutly believe.

CHAPTER III.

I GALLOPED over an illimitable plain, covered with a vivid though scanty pasture, and fragrant with aromatic herbs. A soft, fresh breeze danced on my cheek, and brought vigour to my frame. Day after day I journeyed, and met with no sign of human

existence; no village, no culture, no resting-place, not even a tree. Day after day I journeyed, and the land indicated no termination. At an immense distance the sky and the earth blended in a uniform horizon. Sometimes, indeed, a rocky vein shot out of the soil; sometimes, indeed, the land would swell into long undulations; sometimes, indeed, from a dingle of wild bushes a gazelle would rush forward, stare, and bound away.

Such was my first wandering in the Syrian desert! But remember it was the burst of spring. I could conceive nothing more delightful, nothing more unlike what I had anticipated. The heat was never intense, the breeze was ever fresh and sweet, the nocturnal heavens luminous and clear to a degree which it is impossible to describe. Instead of that uniform appearance and monotonous splendour I had hitherto so often gazed on, the stars were of different tints and forms. Some were green, some white, some red; and, instead of appearing as if they only studded a vast and azure vault, I clearly distinguished them, at different distances, floating in ether.

I no longer wondered at the love of the Bedouins for their free and unsophisticated earth. It appeared to me, that I could have lived in the desert for ever. At night we rested. Our camels bore us water in goat-skins, cakes of fuel, which they themselves produced, and scanty, although sufficient, provisions. We lit our fire, pounded our coffee, and smoked our pipes, while others prepared our simple meal—bread made at the instant, and on the cinders, a slice of dried meat, and a few dates.

I have described the least sterile of the deserts, and I have described it at the most favourable period. In general the soil of the Syrian wilderness is not absolutely barren. The rains cover it with verdure, but these occur only for a very few weeks, when the rigour of a winter day arrests the clouds, and they dissolve into showers. At all other seasons they glide over the scorched and heated plain, which has neither hills nor trees to attract them. It is the want of water which is the occasion of this sterility. In the desert there is not even a brook; springs are rare and generally brackish; and it is on the artificial wells, stored by the rains, that the wanderer chiefly depends.

From the banks of the Euphrates to the shores of the Red Sea; from the banks of the Nile to the Persian Gulf, over a spread of country three times the extent of Germany; Nature, without an interval, ceases to produce. Beneficent Nature! Let us not wrong her; for, even in a land apparently so unfavoured, exists a numerous and happy race. As you wander along, the appearance of the desert changes. The wilderness, which is comparatively fertile in Syria, becomes rocky when you enter Arabia, and sandy

as you proceed. Here in some degree we meet with the terrible idea of the desert prevalent in Europe; but it is in Africa, in the vast and unexplored regions of Libya and Zahara, that we must seek for that illimitable and stormy ocean of overwhelming sand which we associate with the popular idea of the desert.

The sun was nearly setting, when an Arab horseman, armed with his long lance, was suddenly observed on an eminence in the distance. He galloped towards us, wheeled round and round, scudded away, again approached, and our guide, shouting, rode forward to meet him. They entered into earnest conversation, and then joined us. Abdallah, the guide, informed me that this was an Arab of the tribe I intended to visit, and that we were very near their encampment.

The desert was here broken into bushy knolls, which limited the view. Advancing and mounting the low ridge on which we had first observed the Bedouin, Abdallah pointed out to me at no great distance a large circle of low black tents, which otherwise I might not have observed, or have mistaken them in the deceptive twilight for some natural formation. On the left of the encampment was a small grove of palm trees; and when we had nearly gained the settlement, a procession of women in long blue robes, covering with one hand their faces with their veils, and with the other supporting on their heads a tall and classically formed vase, advanced with a beautiful melody to the fountain, which was screened by the palm trees.

The dogs barked: some dark faces and long matchlocks suddenly popped up behind the tents.

The Bedouin, with a shout, galloped into the encampment, and soon reappeared with several of his tribe. We dismounted, and entered the interior court of the camp, which was filled with camels and goats. There were few persons visible, although, as I was conducted along to the tent of the chief, I detected many faces staring at me from behind the curtains of their tents. The pavilion of the scheik was of considerable size. He himself was a man advanced in years, but hale and lively; his long white beard curiously contrasting with his dark visage. He received me, sitting on a mat, his son standing on his right hand without his slippers, and a young grandchild squatting by his side.

He welcomed me with the usual oriental salutation; touching his forehead, his mouth, and his heart, while he exclaimed, "Salam;" thus indicating that all his faculties and feelings were devoted to me. He motioned that we should seat ourselves in the unoccupied mats, and taking from his mouth a small pipe of date wood, gave it to his son to bear to me. A servant instantly began pounding coffee. I then informed him, through Abdallah, that, having heard

of his hospitality and happy life, I had journeyed even from Damascus to visit him; that I greatly admired the Bedouin character, and eulogised their valour, their independence, their justice, and their simplicity.

He answered that he liked to be visited by Franks, because they were wise men, and requested that I would feel his pulse.

I performed this ceremony with becoming gravity, and inquired whether he were indisposed. He said that he was well, but that he might be better. I told him that his pulse was healthy and strong for one of his age, and I begged to examine his tongue, which greatly pleased him; and he observed that he was eighty years of age, and could ride as well and as long as his son.

Coffee was now brought. I ventured to praise it. He said it was well for those who had not wine. I observed that wine was not suited to these climes, and that, although a Frank, I had myself renounced it. He answered that the Franks were fond of wine, but that, for his part, he had never tasted it, although he should like once to do so.

I regretted that I could not avail myself of this delicate hint, but Lausanne produced a bottle of eau-de-Cologne, and I offered him a glass. He drank it with great gravity, and asked for some for his son, observing, it was good raki, but not wine. I suspected from this that he was not totally unacquainted with the flavour of the forbidden liquor, and I dared to remark with a smile, that raki had one advantage over wine, that it was not forbidden by the Prophet. Unlike the Turks, who never understand a jest, he smiled, and then said that the Book (meaning the Koran) was good for men who lived in cities, but that God was everywhere.

Several men now entered the tent, leaving their slippers on the outside, and some saluting the scheik as they passed, seated themselves.

I now inquired after horses, and asked him whether he could assist me in purchasing some of the true breed. The old scheik's eyes sparkled as he informed me that he possessed four mares of pure blood, and that he would not part with one, not even for fifty thousand piastres. After this hint, I was inclined to drop the subject, but the scheik seemed interested by it, and inquired if the Franks had any horses.

I answered, that some Frank nations were famous for their horses, and mentioned the English, who had a superb race from the Arabs. He said he had heard of the English; and asked me which was the greatest nation of the Franks. I told him there were several equally powerful, but perhaps that the English nation might be fairly described as the most important. He answered, "Ay! on the sea, but not on land."

I was surprised by the general knowledge indicated by this remark, and more so when he further observed that there was another nation stronger by land. I mentioned the Russians. He had not heard of them, notwithstanding the recent war with the Porte. The French? I inquired. He knew the French, and then told me he had been at the siege of Acre, which explained all this intelligence. He then inquired, if I were an Englishman. I told him my country, but was not astonished that he had never heard of it. I observed that, when the old man spoke, he was watched by his followers with the greatest attention, and they grinned with pride and exultation at his knowledge of the Franks, showing their white teeth, elevating their eyes, and exchanging looks of wonder.

Two women now entered the tent, at which I was surprised. They had returned from the fountain, and wore small black masks, which covered the upper part of the face. They knelt down at the fire, and made a cake of bread, which one of them handed to me. I now offered to the scheik my own pipe, which Lausanne had prepared. Coffee was again handed, and a preparation of sour milk and rice, not unpalatable.

I offered the scheik renewed compliments on his mode of life, in order to maintain conversation; for the chief, although, like the Arabs in general, of a very lively temperament, had little of the curiosity of what are considered the more civilised Orientals, and asked very few questions.

"We are content," said the scheik.

"Then believe me you are in the condition of no other people," I replied.

"My children," said the scheik, "hear the words of this wise man! If we lived with the Turks," continued the chieftain, "we should have more gold and silver, and more clothes, and carpets, and baths; but we should not have justice and liberty. Our luxuries are few, but our wants are fewer."

"Yet you have neither priests nor lawyers?"

"When men are pure, laws are useless: when men are corrupt, laws are broken."

"And for priests?"

"God is everywhere."

The women now entered with a more substantial meal, the hump of a young camel. I have seldom eaten anything more delicate and tender. This dish was a great compliment, and could only have been offered by a wealthy Scheik. Pipes and coffee followed.

The moon was shining brightly, when, making my excuses, I quitted the pavilion of the chieftain, and went forth to view the humours of the camp. The tall camels, crouching on their knees

in groups, with their outstretched necks and still and melancholy visages, might have been mistaken for works of art had it not been for the process of rumination. A crowd was assembled round a fire, before which a poet recited impassioned verses. I observed the slight forms of the men, short and meagre, agile, dry, and dark, with teeth dazzling white, and quick, black, glancing eyes. They were dressed in cloaks of coarse black cloth, apparently the same stuff as their tents, and few of them, I should imagine, exceeded five feet six inches in height. The women mingled with the men, although a few affected to conceal their faces on my approach. They were evidently deeply interested in the poetic recital. One passage excited their loud applause. I inquired its purport of Abdallah, who thus translated it to me. A lover beholds his mistress, her face covered with a red veil. Thus he addresses her!

“OH! WITHDRAW THAT VEIL, WITHDRAW THAT RED VEIL!
LET ME BEHOLD THE BEAUTY THAT IT SHROUDS! YES! LET
THAT ROSY TWILIGHT FADE AWAY, AND LET THE FULL MOON
RISE TO MY VISION.”

Beautiful! Yet more beautiful in the language of the Arabs; for in that rich tongue, there are words to describe each species of twilight, and where we are obliged to have recourse to an epithet, the Arabs reject the feeble and unnecessary aid.

It was late ere I retired, and I stretched myself on my mat, musing over this singular people, who combined primitive simplicity of habits with the refined feelings of civilisation, and who, in a great degree, appeared to me to offer an evidence of that community of property and that equality of condition, which have hitherto proved the despair of European sages, and fed only the visions of their fanciful Utopias.

CHAPTER IV.

A **SYRIAN** village is very beautiful in the centre of a fertile plain. The houses are isolated, and each surrounded by palm trees; the meadows divided by rich plantations of Indian fig, and bounded by groves of olive.

In the distance rose a chain of severe and savage mountains. I was soon wandering, and for hours, in the wild, stony ravines of these shaggy rocks. At length, after several passes, I gained the

ascent of a high mountain. Upon an opposite height, descending as a steep ravine, and forming, with the elevation on which I rested, a dark and narrow gorge, I beheld a city entirely surrounded by what I should have considered in Europe an old feudal wall, with towers and gates. The city was built upon an ascent, and, from the height on which I stood, I could discern the terrace and the cupola of almost every house, and the wall upon the other side rising from the plain; the ravine extending only on the side to which I was opposite. The city was in a bowl of mountains. In the front was a magnificent mosque, with beautiful gardens, and many light and lofty gates of triumph; a variety of domes and towers rose in all directions from the buildings of bright stone.

Nothing could be conceived more wild, and terrible, and desolate than the surrounding scenery, more dark, and stormy, and severe; but the ground was thrown about in such picturesque undulations, that the mind, full of the sublime, required not the beautiful; and rich and waving woods and sparkling cultivation would have been misplaced. Except Athens, I had never witnessed any scene more essentially impressive. I will not place this spectacle below the city of Minerva. Athens and the Holy City in their glory must have been the finest representations of the beautiful and the sublime—the Holy City, for the elevation on which I stood was the Mount of Olives, and the city on which I gazed, was JERUSALEM!

CHAPTER V.

THE dark gorge beneath me was the vale of Jehoshaphat; farther on was the fountain of Siloah. I entered by the gate of Bethlehem, and sought hospitality at the Latin Convent of the Terra Santa.

Easter was approaching, and the city was crowded with pilgrims. I had met many caravans in my progress. The convents of Jerusalem are remarkable. That of the Armenian Christians at this time afforded accommodation for four thousand pilgrims. It is a town of itself, and possesses within its walls streets and shops. The Greek Convent held perhaps half as many. And the famous Latin Convent of the Terra Santa, endowed by all the monarchs of Catholic Christendom, could boast of only one pilgrim—myself! The Europeans have ceased to visit the Holy Sepulchre.

As for the interior of Jerusalem it is lilly and clean. The

houses are of stone and well built, but like all Asiatic mansions, they offer nothing to the eye but blank walls and dull portals. The mosque I had admired was the famous Mosque of Omar, built upon the supposed site of the Temple. It is perhaps the most beautiful of Mahomedan temples, but the Frank, even in the Eastern dress, will enter it at the risk of his life. The Turks of Syria have not been contaminated by the heresies of their enlightened Sultan. In Damascus it is impossible to appear in the Frank dress without being pelted; and although they would condescend, perhaps, at Jerusalem to permit an infidel dog to walk about in his national dress, he would not escape many a curse and many a scornful exclamation of "Giaour!" There is only one way to travel in the East with ease, and that is with an appearance of pomp. The Turks are much influenced by the exterior, and although they are not mercenary, a well-dressed and well-attended infidel will command respect.*

CHAPTER VI.

THE church of the Holy Sepulchre is nearly in the middle of the city, and professedly built upon Mount Calvary, which, it is alleged, was levelled for the structure. Within its walls they have contrived to assemble the scenes of a vast number of incidents in the life of the Saviour, with a highly romantic violation of the unity of place. Here the sacred feet were anointed, there the sacred garments parcelled; from the pillar of the scourging to the rent of the rock, all is exhibited in a succession of magical scenes. The truth is, the whole is an ingenious imposture of a comparatively recent date, and we are indebted to that favoured individual, the Empress Helen, for this exceedingly clever creation, as well as for the discovery of the true cross. The learned believe, and with reason, that Calvary is at present, as formerly, without the walls, and that we must seek this celebrated elevation in the lofty hill now called Sion.

The church is a spacious building, surmounted by a dome. Attached to it are the particular churches of the various Christian sects, and many chapels and sanctuaries. Mass in some part or other is constantly celebrating, and companies of pilgrims may be observed in all directions, visiting the holy places and offering their

* The reader will be kind enough to remember that these observations were made in Syria in the year 1830. Since that period the Levant has undergone great vicissitudes.

devotions. Latin and Armenian, and Greek friars, are everywhere moving about. The court is crowded with the venders of relics and rosaries. The church of the Sepulchre itself is a point of common union, and in its bustle and lounging character rather reminded me of an exchange than a temple.

One day as I was pacing up and down this celebrated building, in conversation with a very ingenious Neapolitan friar, experienced in the East, my attention was attracted by one who, from his sumptuous dress, imposing demeanour, self-satisfied air, and the coolness with which, in a Christian temple, he waved in his hand a rosary of Mecca, I for a moment considered a Moslem. "Is it customary for the Turks to visit this place?" I inquired, drawing the attention of my companion to the stranger.

"The stranger is not a Turk," answered the friar, "though I fear I cannot call him a Christian. It is Marigny, a French traveller. Do you not know him? I will introduce you. He is a man of distinguished science, and has resided some months in this city, studying Arabic."

We approached him, and the friar made us acquainted.

"Salam Aleikoum! Count. Here at least is no inquisition. Let us enjoy ourselves. How mortifying, my good brother Antony, that you cannot burn me!"

The friar smiled, and was evidently used to this raillery.

"I hope yet to behold the Kaaba," said Marigny; "it is at least more genuine than anything we here see."

"Truth is not truth to the false," said brother Antony.

"What, you reason!" exclaimed Marigny. "Stick to faith and infallibility, my good friend Antonio. I have just been viewing the rent in the rock. It is a pity, holy father, that I have discovered that it is against the grain."

"The greater the miracle," said the friar.

"Bravo! you deserve to be a bishop."

"The church has no fear of just reasoners," observed brother Antony.

"And is confuted, I suppose, only by the unjust," rejoined Marigny.

"Man without religion is a wild beast," remarked the friar.

"Which religion?" inquired Marigny.

"There is only one true religion," said brother Antony.

"Exactly; and in this country, Master Antony, remember you are an infidel."

"And you, they say, are a Moslem."

"They say wrong. I believe in no human revelation, because it obtrudes the mind of another man into my body, and must destroy morality, which can only be discovered by my own intelligence."

"All is divine revelation," said a stranger who joined us.

"Ah! Werner," said Marigny, "you see we are at our old contests."

"All is divine revelation," repeated Werner, "for all comes from God."

"But what do you mean by God?"

"I mean the great luminous principle of existence, the first almighty cause from whom we are emanations, and in whose essence we shall again mingle."

"I asked for bread, and you gave me a stone. I asked for a fact, and you give me a word. I cannot annex an idea to what you say. Until my Creator gift me with an intelligence that can comprehend the idea of his existence, I must conclude that he does not desire that I should busy myself about it."

"That idea is implanted in our breasts," said Werner.

"Innate!" exclaimed Marigny, with a sneer.

"And why not innate?" replied Werner solemnly. "Is it impossible for the Great Being who created us to create us with a sense of his existence?"

"Listen to these philosophers," said brother Antony; "I never heard two of them agree. I must go to mass."

"Mr. Werner and myself, Count," said Marigny, "are about to smoke a pipe with Besso, a rich Hebrew merchant here. He is one of the finest-hearted fellows in the world, and generous as he is rich. Will you accompany us? You will greatly honour him. and find in his divan some intelligent society."

CHAPTER VII.

MARIGNY was a sceptic and an absolute materialist, yet he was influenced by noble views, for he had devoted his life to science and was now, at his own charge, about to penetrate into the interior of Africa by Sennaar. Werner was a German divine and a rationalist, tauntingly described by his companion as a devout Christian, who did not believe in Christianity. Yet he had resided in Palestine and Egypt nearly four years, studying their language and customs, and accumulating materials for a history of the miraculous creed whose miracles he explained. Both were men of remarkable intellectual powers, and the ablest champions of their respective systems.

I accompanied these new acquaintances to the house of Besso,

and was most hospitably received, and sumptuously entertained. I have seldom met with a man of more easy manners and a more gracious carriage than Besso, who, although sincere in his creed, was the least bigoted of his tribe. He introduced us to his visitor, his friend and correspondent, Sheriff Effendi, an Egyptian merchant, who fortunately spoke the lingua Franca with facility. The other guest was an Englishman, by name Benson, a missionary, and a very learned, pious, and acute man.

Such was the party in whose society I generally spent a portion of my day during my residence at Jerusalem: and I have often thought that, if the conversations to which I have there listened were recorded, a volume might be sent forth of more wit and wisdom than are now usually met with. The tone of discussion was, in general, metaphysical and scientific, varied with speculations principally on African travel—a subject with which Sheriff Effendi was well acquainted. In metaphysics, sharp were the contests between Benson, Marigny, and Werner, and on all sides ably maintained. I listened to them with great interest. Besso smiled, and Sheriff Effendi shrugged his shoulders.

Understanding that this mild and intelligent Moslem was in a few days about to join the caravan over the desert, through Gaza, to Egypt, I resolved to accompany him. I remember well that, on the eve of our departure, one of those metaphysical discussions arose in which Marigny delighted. When it terminated, he proposed that, as our agreeable assembly was soon about to disperse, each of us should inscribe on a panel of the wall some sentence as a memorial of his sojourn.

Benson wrote first—“*For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all men shall be made alive.*”

Werner wrote—“*Glory to Christ! The supernatural has destroyed the natural.*”

Marigny wrote—“*Knowledge is human.*”

Besso wrote—“*I will not believe in those who must believe in me.*”

Sheriff Effendi wrote—“*God is great:—man should be charitable.*”

Contarini Fleming wrote—“*Time.*”

These are the words that were written in the house of Besso, the Hebrew, residing at Jerusalem, near the Gate of Sion. Amen! Travel teaches toleration.

CHAPTER VIII.

PERCHANCE, while I am writing these pages, some sage may be reading, in the once mysterious inscriptions of the most ancient of people, some secret which may change the foundations of human knowledge. Already the chronology of the world assumes a new aspect; already, in the now intelligible theology of Egypt, we have discovered the origin of Grecian polytheism; already we have penetrated beyond the delusive veil of Ptolemaic transmutation: Isis has yielded to Athor, and Osiris to Knepth. The scholar discards the Grecian nomenclature of Sesostris and Memnon. In the temples of Carnac he discovers the conquests of Rameses, and in the palaces of Medinet Abou, the refined civilisation of Amenoph.

Singular fate of modern ages, that beneficent Omnipotence has willed that for all our knowledge we should be indebted to the most insignificant of ancient states. Our divine instruction is handed down to us by an Arabian tribe, and our profane learning flows only from the clans of the *Ægean*!

Where are the records of the Great Assyrian monarchy? Where are the books of the Medes and Persians? Where the learned annals of the Pharaohs?

Fortunate Jordan! Fortunate Ilissus! I have waded through the sacred waters; with difficulty I traced the scanty windings of the classic stream. Alas! for the exuberant Tigris; alas! for the mighty Euphrates; alas! for the mysterious Nile!

A river is suddenly found flowing through the wilderness; its source is unknown. On one side are interminable wastes of sand; on the other, a rocky desert and a narrow sea. Thus it rolls on for five hundred miles, throwing up on each side, to the extent of about three leagues, a soil fertile as a garden. Within a hundred and fifty miles of the sea it divides into two branches, which wind through an immense plain, once the granary of the world. Such is Egypt!

From the cataracts of Nubia to the gardens of the Delta, in a course of twelve hundred miles, the banks of the Nile are covered at slight intervals with temples and catacombs, pyramids and painted chambers. The rock temples of Ipsambol, guarded by colossal forms, are within the roar of the second cataract: avenues of sphinxes lead to Derr, the chief town of Nubia: from Derr to the first cataract, the Egyptian boundary, a series of rock temples conduct to the beautiful and sacred buildings of Philœ: Edfou

and Esneh are a fine preparation for the colossal splendour and the massy grace of ancient Thebes.

Even after the inexhaustible curiosity and varied magnificence of this unrivalled record of ancient art, the beautiful Dendera, consummate blending of Egyptian imagination and Grecian taste, will command your enthusiastic gaze; and, if the catacombs of Siout and the chambers of Benihassan prove less fruitful of interest after the tombs of the kings and the cemeteries of Gornou, before you are the obelisks of Memphis, and the pyramids of Gizeh, Saccarah, and Dashour!

CHAPTER IX.

THE traveller who crosses the desert and views the Nile with its lively villages, clustered in groves of palm, and its banks entirely lined with that graceful tree, will bless with sincerity "the Father of Waters." 'Tis a rich land, and indeed flowing with milk and honey. The Delta in its general appearance somewhat reminded me of Belgium. The soil everywhere is a rich black mud and without a single stone. The land is so uniformly flat that those who arrive by sea do not descry it until within half a dozen miles, when a palm tree creeps upon the horizon, and then you observe the line of land that supports it. The Delta is intersected by canals, which are filled by the rising Nile. It is by their medium, and not by the absolute overflowing of the river, that the country is periodically deluged.

The Arabs are gay, witty, vivacious, and very susceptible and acute. It is difficult to render them miserable, and a beneficent government may find in them the most valuable subjects. A delightful climate is some compensation for a grinding tyranny. Every night, as they row along the moonlit river, the boatmen join in a melodious chorus; shouts of merriment burst from each illumined village; everywhere are heard the sounds of laughter and of music, and, wherever you stop, you are saluted by the dancing girls. These are always graceful in their craft; sometimes very agreeable in their persons. They are gaily, even richly dressed in bright colours, with their hair braided with pearls, and their necks and foreheads adorned with strings of gold coin. In their voluptuous dance, we at once detect the origin of the bolero and fandango and castanets of Spain.

I admire very much the Arab women. They are very delicately

moulded. Never have I seen such twinkling feet and such small hands. Their complexion is clear, and not dark; their features beautifully formed and sharply defined; their eyes liquid with passion, and bright with intelligence. The traveller is delighted to find himself in an oriental country where the women are not imprisoned and scarcely veiled. For a long time, I could not detect the reason why I was so charmed with Egyptian life. At last I recollected that I had recurred, after a long estrangement, to the cheerful influence of women.

CHAPTER X.

I FOLLOWED the course of the Nile far into Nubia, and did not stop until I was under the tropic of Cancer. Shortly after quitting Egypt, the landscape changes. It is perfectly African; mountains of burning sand, vegetation unnaturally vivid, groves of cocoa trees, groups of crocodiles, and an ebony population in a state of nudity, armed with spears of reeds and shields of the hide of the hippopotamus and the giraffe.

The voyage back was tedious, and I was glad after so much wandering to settle down in Cairo.

CHAPTER XI.

CAIRO is situate on the base of considerable hills, whose origin cannot be accounted for, but which are undoubtedly artificial. They are formed by the ruins and the rubbish of long centuries. When I witness these extraordinary formations, which are not uncommon in the neighbourhood of Eastern cities, I am impressed with the idea of the immense antiquity of oriental society.

There is a charm about Cairo, and it is this—that it is a capita in a desert. In one moment you are in the stream of existence, and in another in boundless solitude, or, which is still more awful, the silence of tombs. I speak of the sepulchres of the Mamlouk sultans without the city. They form what may indeed be styled a City of the Dead, an immense Necropolis, full of exquisite buildings,

domes covered with fretwork, and minarets carved and moulded with rich and elegant fancy. To me they proved much more interesting than the far-famed pyramids, although their cones in a distance are indeed sublime—their grey cones soaring in the light blue sky.

The genius that has raised the tombs of the sultans may also be traced in many of the mosques of the city—splendid specimens of Saracenic architecture. In gazing upon these brilliant creations, and also upon those of ancient Egypt, I have often been struck by the felicitous system which they display, of ever forming the external ornaments by inscriptions—how far excelling the Grecian and Gothic method! Instead of a cornice of flowers, or an entablature of unmeaning fancy, how superior to be reminded of the power of the Creator, or the necessity of government, the deeds of conquerors, or the discoveries of arts!

CHAPTER XII.

It was in these solitary rides in the Desert of Cairo, and in these lone wanderings amid the tombs of the Sultans, that I first again felt the desire of composition. My mind appeared suddenly to have returned. I became restless, disquieted. I found myself perpetually indulging in audible soliloquy, and pouring forth impassioned monologues. I was pleased with the system of oriental life, and the liberty in which, in Egypt, Franks can indulge. I felt no inclination to return to Europe, and I determined to cast my lot in this pleasant and fruitful land. I had already spent in Cairo several months, and I now resolved to make it my permanent residence, when I received strange letters from my father. I style them *strange*, for there breathed throughout a tone of melancholy which with him was quite unusual, and which perplexed me. He complained of ill health, and expressed a hope that my wanderings were drawing to a close, and that we might again meet. I had been nearly six years absent. Was it possible? Was it indeed six years since I stood upon Mount Jura? And yet in that time how much had happened! How much had I seen, and felt, and learnt! What violent passions, what strange countries, what lively action, and what long meditation!

Strange as may have appeared my conduct to my father, I loved him devotedly. An indication of sentiment on his part ever called forth all my latent affection. It was the conviction, of which I

could never divest myself, that he was one who could spare no portion of his sense for the softer feelings, and that his conduct to me was rather in accordance with the system of society than instigated by what I should consider the feelings of a father—it was this conviction that had alone permitted me so long to estrange myself from his hearth. But now he called me back, and almost in sorrow. I read his letter over and over again, dwelt on all its affection and all its suppressed grief. I felt an irresistible desire to hasten to him without a moment's delay. I longed to receive his blessing and his embrace.

I quitted Cairo. The Mahmadie canal was not yet open. I was obliged, therefore, to sail to Rosetta. Thence I crossed the desert in a constant mirage, and arrived at the famous Alexandria. In this busy port I was not long in finding a ship. One was about to sail for Ancona. I engaged a passage, and soon the palms and sands of Egypt vanished from my sight.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR passage was tedious. The captain was afraid of pirates, and, alarmed in the night, suddenly changed his course, and made for the Barbary coast, by which we lost our wind. We were becalmed off Candia. I once more beheld Mount Ida.

Having induced the captain to run into port, I landed once more on that fatal coast. The old consul and his family were still there, and received me with a kindness which reminded me of our first happy meeting. I slept in the same chamber. When I awoke in the morning the sun was still shining, the bright plants still quivering in its beams. But the gazelle had gone, the white gazelle had died. And my gazelle—where was she.

I beheld our home, our once happy home. Spiro only was with me, and his family came forth with joy to greet him. I left them, and hastened with tremulous steps to the happy valley. I passed by the grove of orange trees. My strength deserted me. I leant nearly fainting against a tree. At last I dared to advance a step, and look forward.

I beheld it—yes! I beheld it, green and verdant, and covered with white roses; but I dared not approach. I wafted it an embrace and a blessing, and rushed to the shore.

At Ancona I entered the lazaretto to perform a long quaran-

tine. I instantly wrote to my father, and despatched a courier to my banker at Florence. I received from him in a few days a packet. I opened it with a sad foreboding. A letter in my father's handwriting reassured me. I tore it open; I read.

CHAPTER XIV.

"My beloved Contarini, the hand of death is upon me. Each day my energies decrease. I can conceal from others, but not from myself, my gradual but certain decay. We shall not meet again, my child; I have a deep conviction we shall not meet again. Yet I would not die without expressing to you my love, without yielding to feelings which I have too long suppressed.

"Child of my affections! receive my blessing. Offspring of my young passion! let me press you, in imagination, to my lone bosom!

"Ah! why are you not with me—why is not my hand in yours! There is much to say, more than I can ever express—yet I must write, for I would not die without my son doing justice to his father.

"As a child, you doubted my love; as a man, in spite of all your struggles, I am conscious you never divested yourself of the agonising idea. What is this life, this life of error and misconception and woe!

"My feeble pen trembles in my hand. There is much to write, much, alas! that never can be written. Why are we parted?

"You think me cold; you think me callous; you think me a hollow-hearted worldling. Contarini! recal the doubt and misery of your early years, and all your wild thoughts, and dark misgivings, and vain efforts—recal all these, and behold the boyhood of your father!

"I, too, believed myself a poet—I, too, aspired to emancipate my kind—I, too, looked forward to a glorious future, and the dazzling vista of eternal fame. The passions of my heart were not less violent than yours, and not less ardent was my impetuous love.

"Woe! woe! the father and the son have been alike stricken. I know all—I know all, my child. I would have saved you from the bitter lot—I alone would have borne the deep despair.

"Was she fair? Was she beautiful? Alas! there was once one as bright and as glorious—you knew not your mother.

"I can remember the day but as yesterday when I first gazed

upon the liquid darkness of her eye. It was that fatal city I will not name—horrible Venice!

“I found her surrounded by a thousand slaves—I won her from amid this band; against the efforts and opposition of all her family I won her. Yes! she was my bride—the beautiful daughter of this romantic land—a land to which I was devoted, and for which I would have perilled my life. Alas! I perilled my love! My imagination was fired by that wondrous and witching city. My love of freedom, my hatred of oppression, burned each day with a brighter and more vehement flame. I sighed over its past glory and present degradation; and when I mingled my blood with the veins of the Contarini, I vowed I would revive the glory they had themselves created.

“Venice was at that time under the yoke of the French. The recollection of the republic was still fresh in men’s minds; the son of the last doge was my relative and my friend. Unhappy Manini! thy memory demands a tear.

“We conspired. Even now my blood seems to flow with renewed force, when I recal the excitement of our secret meetings in the old Palazzo Contarini, on the Grand Lagune. How often has daylight on the waters reminded us of our long councils!

“We were betrayed. Timely information permitted me to escape. I bore away my wife. We reached Mantua in safety. Perhaps it was the agitation of the event and the flight; since the tragedy of Candia I have sometimes thought it might have been a constitutional doom. But that fatal night—why, why recal it! We have both alike suffered. No, not alike, for I had my child.

“My child, my darling child, even now your recollection maintains me; even now my cheek warms, as I repose upon the anticipation of your glory.

“I will not dwell upon what I then endured. Alas! I cannot leave it to your imagination. Your reality has taught you all. I roved a madman amid the mountains of the Tyrol. But you were with me, my child, and I looked upon your mild and pensive eyes, and the wildness of my thoughts died away.

“I recurred to those hopes of poetic fame which had soothed the dull wretchedness of my boyhood. Alas! no flame from heaven descended on my lyre. I experienced only mortification; and so complete was my wretchedness, so desolate my life, so void of hope and cheerfulness, and even the prospect of that common ease which the merest animals require, that, had it not been for you, I would have freed myself from the indescribable burden of my existence. My hereditary estates were confiscated; my friends, like myself, were in exile. We were, in fact, destitute, and I had lost all confidence in my energies.

"Thus woe-begone, I entered Vienna, where I found a friend. Mingling in the artificial society of that refined city, those excited feelings, fed by my strange adventures and solitary life, subsided. I began to lose what was peculiar in me, and to share much that was general. Worldly feelings sprang up. Some success brought back my confidence. I believed that I was not destitute of power, but had only mistaken its nature. It was a political age. A great theatre seemed before me. I had ever been ambitious. I directed my desires into a new channel, and I determined to be a statesman.

"I had attracted the attention of the Austrian minister. I became his secretary. You know the rest.

"I resolved that my child should be happy. I desired to save him from the misery that clouded my own youth. I would have preserved him from the tyranny of impetuous passions, and the harrowing woe that awaits an ill-regulated mind. I observed in him a dangerous susceptibility that alarmed me. I studied to prevent the indulgence of his feelings. I was kind, but I was calm. His imaginative temperament did not escape me. I perceived only hereditary weakness, and would have prevented hereditary woe. It was my aim to make him a practical man. Contarini, it was the anxiety of affection that prevented me from doing justice to your genius.

"My son, could I but once press you in my arms, I should die happy. And even now the future supports me, and I feel the glory of your coming fame irradiating my tomb.

"Why cannot we meet? I could say so much, although I would say only I loved you. The pen falls from my hand—the feeble pen, that has signified nothing. Imagine what I would express. Cherish my memory, while you receive my blessing."

"Let me fly—let me fly to him instantly!" I felt the horrors of my imprisonment; I wrung my hands, and stamped from helplessness. There was a packet. I opened it: a lock of rich dark hair, whose colour was not strange to me, and a beautiful miniature, that seemed a portrait of my beloved—yet I gazed upon the countenance of my mother.

CHAPTER XV.

THERE was yet a letter from my banker which I long neglected to open. I opened it at last, and learned the death of my remaining parent.

The age of tears was past; that relief was denied me. I looked up to Heaven in despair. I flew to a darkened chamber. I buried my face in my hands; and, lone and speechless, I delivered myself up for days to the silent agony of the past.

PART THE SEVENTH.



CHAPTER I.

I LEANT against a column of the Temple of Castor. On one side was the Palace of the Cæsars; on the other, the colossal amphitheatre of Vespasian. Arches of triumph, the pillars of Pagan temples, and the domes of Christian churches rose around me. In the distance was the wide Campagna, the Claudian Aqueduct, and the Alban Mount.

Solitude and silence reigned on that sacred road once echoing with the shouts and chariots of three hundred triumphs—solitude and silence, meet companions of imperial desolation! Where are the spoils of Egypt and of Carthage? Where the golden tribute of Iberia? Where the long Gallic trophies? Where are the rich armour and massy cups of Macedon? Where are the pictures and statues of Corinth? Where the libraries of Athens? Where is the broken bow of Parthia? Where the elephants of Pontus, and the gorgeous diadems of the Asian kings?

And where is Rome? All nations rose and flourished only to swell her splendour, and now I stand amid her ruins.

In such a scene what are our private griefs and petty sorrows? And what is man? I felt my nothingness. Life seemed flat, and dull, and trifling. I could not conceive that I could again become interested in its base pursuits. I believed that I could no longer be influenced by joy or by sorrow. Indifference alone remained.

A man clambered down the steep of the Palatine. It was Winter, flushed and eager from a recent excavation.

"What, Count," he exclaimed, "moralising in the Forum!"

"Alas, Winter, what is life?"

"An excellent thing, as long as one can discover as pretty a Torso as I have stumbled upon this morning."

"A Torso! a maimed memorial of the past. The very name is melancholy."

"What is the past to me? I am not dead. You may be. I exist in the present."

"The vanity of the present overpowers me."

"Pooh! I tell you what, my friend, the period has arrived in your life, when you must renounce meditation. Action is now your part. Meditation is culture. It is well to think until a man has discovered his genius, and developed his faculties, but then let him put his intelligence in motion. Act, act, act; act without ceasing, and you will no longer talk of the vanity of life."

"But how am I to act?"

"Create. Man is made to create, from the poet to the potter."

CHAPTER II.

MY father bequeathed me his entire property, which was more considerable than I imagined: the Countess and her children being amply provided for by her own estate. In addition to this, I found that he had claimed in my favour the Contarini estates, to which, independent of the validity of my marriage, I was entitled through my mother. After much litigation, the question had been decided in my behalf a few months before my return to Italy. I found myself, therefore, unexpectedly a rich man. I wrote to the Countess, and received from her a very affectionate reply; nor should I omit that I was honoured by an autograph letter of condolence from the King and an invitation to re-enter his service.

As I was now wearied with wandering, and desirous of settling down in life; and as I had been deprived of those affections which render home delightful, I determined to find in the creations of art some consolation, and some substitute for that domestic bliss which I value above all other blessings. I resolved to create a paradise. I purchased a large estate in the vicinity of Naples, with a palace and beautiful gardens. I called in the assistance of the first artists in the country; and I availed myself, above all, of the fine taste of my friend Winter. The palace was a Palladian pile, built upon a stately terrace covered with orange and citron trees, and to which you ascended by broad flights of marble steps. The formation of the surrounding country was highly picturesque—hills beautifully peaked or undulating, and richly wooded, covered

with the cypress and the ilex, and crowned with the stone pine. Occasionally you caught a glimpse of the blue sea and the brilliant coast.

Upon the terrace, upon each side of the portal, I have placed a colossal sphinx, which were excavated when I was at Thebes, and which I was fortunate enough to purchase. They are of rose-coloured granite, and as fresh and sharp as if they were finished yesterday. There is a soft majesty and a serene beauty in the countenances, which are very remarkable.

It is my intention to build in these beautiful domains a Saracenic palace, which my oriental collections will befit, but which I hope also to fill with the masterpieces of Christian art. At present I have placed in a gallery some fine specimens of the Venetian, Roman, and Eclectic schools, and have ranged between them copies in marble, by Bertolini, of the most celebrated ancient statues. In one cabinet, by itself, is the gem of my collection, a Magdalen by Murillo; and, in another, a sleeping Cupid, by Canova, over which I have contrived, by a secret light, to throw a rosy flush, that invests the ideal beauty of the sculptor with a still more ideal life. At the end of the gallery I have placed the portraits of my father and of my mother—the latter copied by an excellent artist from the miniature. Between them is a frame of richly carved ivory, enclosing a black velvet veil, studded with white roses worked in pearls.

Around me, I hope in time to create a scene which may rival in beauty and variety, although not in extent, the villa of Hadrian, whom I have always considered the most sumptuous and accomplished character of antiquity. I have already commenced the foundation of a tower which shall rise at least one hundred and fifty feet, and which, I trust, will equal in the beauty of the design and in the solidity of the masonry the most celebrated works of antiquity. This tower I shall dedicate to the Future, and I intend that it shall be my tomb.

Latsanne has married, and will never quit me. He has promised also to form a band of wind instruments, a solace necessary to solitude. Winter is my only friend and my only visitor. He is a great deal with me, and has a studio in the palace. He is so independent, that he often arrives and quits it without my knowledge; yet I never converse with him without pleasure.

Here let me pass my life in the study and the creation of the beautiful. Such is my desire; but whether it will be my career is, I feel, doubtful. My interest in the happiness of my race is too keen to permit me for a moment to be blind to the storms that lour on the horizon of society. Perchance also the political regeneration

of the country to which I am devoted may not be distant, and in that great work I am resolved to participate. Bitter jest, that the most civilised portion of the globe should be considered incapable of self-government!

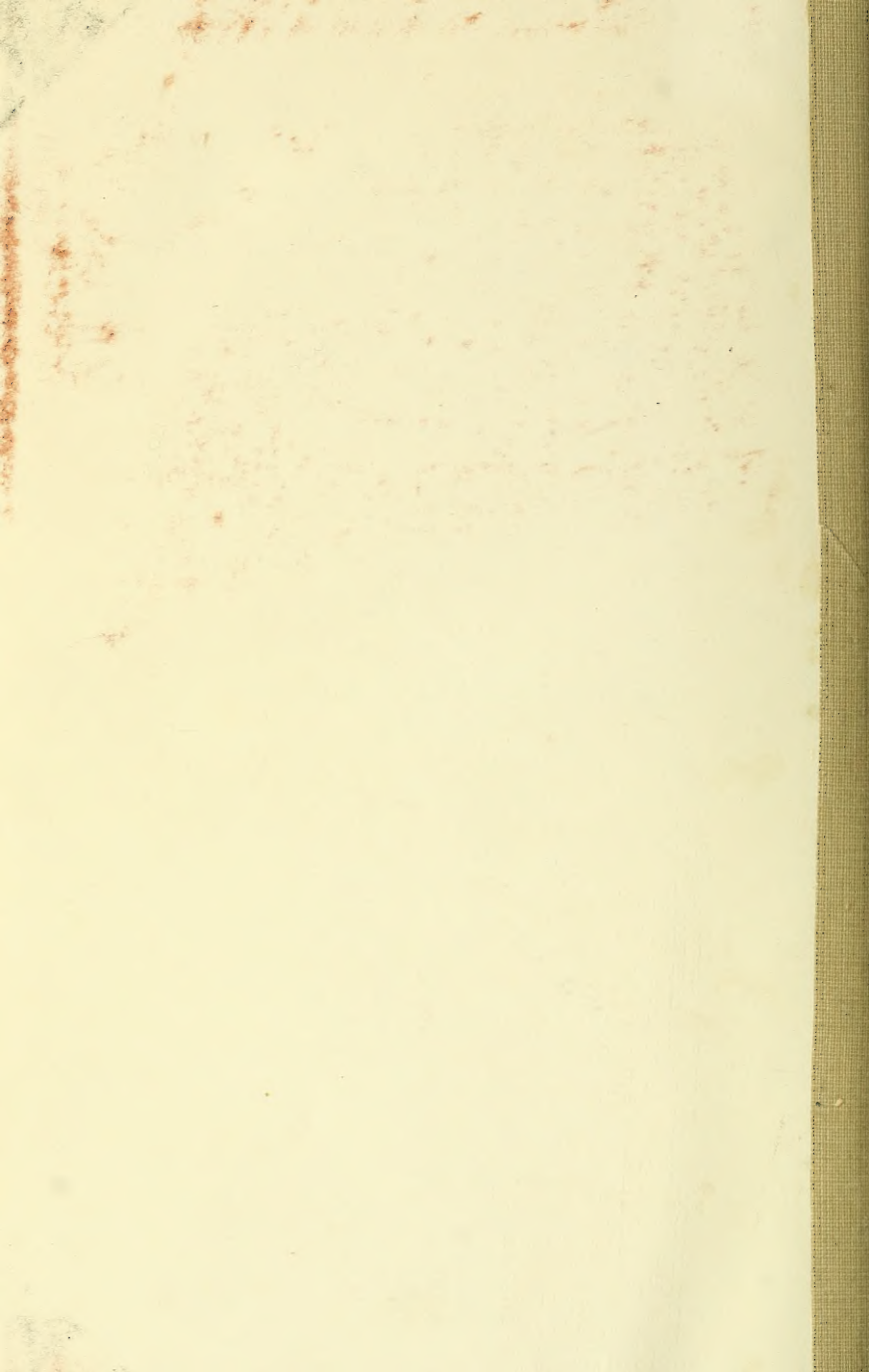
When I examine the state of European society with the unimpassioned spirit which the philosopher can alone command, I perceive that it is in a state of transition—a state of transition from feudal to federal principles. This I conceive to be the sole and secret cause of all the convulsions that have occurred and are to occur.

Circumstances are beyond the control of man; but his conduct is in his own power. The great event is as sure as that I am now penning this prophecy of its occurrence. With us it rests whether it shall be welcomed by wisdom or by ignorance—whether its beneficent results shall be accelerated by enlightened minds, or retarded by our dark passions.

What is the arch of the conqueror, what the laurel of the poet! I think of the infinity of space, I feel my nothingness. Yet if I am to be remembered, let me be remembered as one who, in a sad night of gloomy ignorance and savage bigotry, was prescient of the flaming morning-break of bright philosophy—as one who deeply sympathised with his fellow-men, and felt a proud and profound conviction of their perfectibility—as one who devoted himself to the amelioration of his kind, by the destruction of error and the propagation of truth.

THE END.

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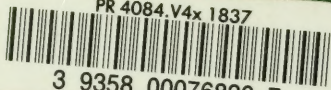
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